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SHELLEY'S POETICAL WORKS

VOLUME I

... men
Are cradled into poetry by wrong,
They learn in suffering what they teach in song.

His left hand held the lyre, and in his right
The plectrum struck the chords—unconquerable
Up from beneath his hand in circling flight
The gathering music rose—and sweet as Love
The penetrating notes did live and move
Within the heart of great Apollo...

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J.B. Shill

THE POETICAL WORKS
OF
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

GIVEN FROM HIS OWN EDITIONS AND OTHER
AUTHENTIC SOURCES

COLLATED WITH MANY MANUSCRIPTS AND WITH ALL EDITIONS
OF AUTHORITY

TOGETHER WITH HIS PREFACES AND NOTES
HIS POETICAL TRANSLATIONS AND FRAGMENTS
AND AN APPENDIX OF
JUVENILIA

EDITED BY H BUXTON FORMAN



SECOND EDITION WITH THE NOTES OF
MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY

IN TWO VOLUMES
VOLUME I

LONDON
REEVES & TURNER 196 STRAND

1886

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P R E F A C E

BY THE EDITOR.

THE ready and wide acceptance of my annotated Library Edition of the Works of Shelley induces me to believe that there is place for an edition of the text, given accurately from the most authentic sources without annotation of any kind. In the following pages, therefore, I have separated from the extensive notes and appendices of the Library Edition the text as there printed, adopting also the same principles of arrangement. There must be many students of Shelley who have no time or inclination to go into the pros and cons of textual discussion, but who would gladly have under their hands in a portable and readable form the ipsissima verba of the master in what has the best claim to be considered their ultimate developement. To this class of readers, variorum readings even are of no sufficient interest to compensate for repetition and the distraction of coming to a conclusion on the relative merits of the several readings; and for such, it will be enough to have the ultimate work in its entirety and integrity.

The present Edition contains every poem or fragment of verse by Shelley which has ever as far as I am aware been published, and a few dozens of lines not included in any previous edition. All his prefaces, dedications, notes, and mottoes are given, together with all his poetic translations, and an appendix consisting of the whole series of *Juvenilia*, from the *Verses on a Cat* written when he was some eight years old to the remarkable poem by which he is still perhaps most widely known—*Queen Mab*. This I have given in its original form among the *Juvenilia*; while including in the series of mature works, notwithstanding the considerable repetitions involved, the revision made in 1815 under the title of *The*

Dæmon of the World—which I was enabled to complete from the copy mentioned in Medwin's and Middleton's Lives of Shelley. And there are other instances in which studies and cancelled passages of importance are retained as a portion of the text of Shelley's poetry, albeit including lines and expressions which occur in the finished forms.

To produce in the case of Shelley as near an approximation as may be to the text that the poet intended to issue, is a more than ordinarily difficult task,—not from any lack of materials, for the mass of material extant is astonishing when we consider the vicissitudes to which his works have been subjected. The difficulty is in deciding what shall be the authority for the text in each particular poem. In respect of books seen through the press by himself, there ought to be no difficulty whatever, except as regards isolated words and stops; but unfortunately he did not revise while at press one half of the entire bulk of his poetry, several of the volumes having been printed in England while he was abroad, and read through the press by friends. The proportion of his mature works, from *Alastor* onwards, which had the advantage of his personal revision when in type, would, I think, be liberally estimated at one third; and the largest of the volumes seen through the press by himself is infamously printed. Generally speaking, however, where there is no manuscript extant, the text as printed in Shelley's life-time must be accepted as the nearest obtainable approach to an authority; and even when there is a manuscript extant, it is by no means a final authority as a matter of course. The relative value of a poem as printed in Shelley's life-time and as written out by him must depend not only upon the revision of the press by the author or his substitute, but upon the technical quality of the printer's work, and the amount of care bestowed upon the manuscript. If the printed version is obviously a careless piece of typography, it loses much of its authority even though seen through the press by Shelley himself. This is preëminently the case with *Laon and Cythna*; and the extant manuscript fragments tend to shew that the printer had not one of Shelley's best manuscripts to work from. *Alastor*, on the contrary, seems to me a very creditable piece of printer's work, on the whole; and, if a manuscript of that volume were discovered, I should not expect it to authorize

more than two important verbal alterations. The *Rosalind and Helen* volume, again, of which proof sheets were certainly not seen by Shelley, is inferior to the *Alastor* volume as an authority; but probably the manuscript of the eclogue itself would be found very hasty and inconsistent in the matters of detail in which alone the printed text is suspicious to any great extent.

These three instances are merely typical of the kind of consideration applicable to every one of Shelley's volumes; and to reprint his published series just as they stand, without correcting palpable errors, would thus be an inadequate attempt to approach the genuine text. I have therefore not scrupled to remove many small blemishes of three classes, (1) those for which the printer is clearly responsible, (2) those for which Shelley may be responsible, but would certainly have removed if he had observed them, and (3) those for which Shelley's substitute for the time being is probably responsible. No alteration has been made unless I have felt sure the original was not what Shelley meant it to be, or would have wished it to be; and, I may almost add, unless it has been perfectly obvious what change should be made. Conjecture has no part nor lot in the matter.

It is easy enough to go on the assumption that everything in a text is right, and reprint it in fac-simile; and it is not much less easy to go on the opposite assumption that everything a little out of one's ordinary experience is wrong, and alter it forthwith. But the difficulty, with such texts as Shelley's, is to discriminate between unintentional inaccuracies in printing or writing and intentional eccentricities of style, metre, punctuation, and orthography. In my opinion the least correct of all the volumes published by Shelley during his life-time is very far pleasanter to read, and very much nearer the fact of his intention, than any of the posthumous texts published up to the year 1876. The chief reason of this I take to be a want of veneration on the part of his editors,—a failure to perceive that Shelley's eccentricities, even his errors if errors there be, must be far more interesting to intelligent humanity at large than any punctilious correctness not Shelley's. Even if the aggregate genius of the present generation were brought to bear upon the task of systematizing Shelley's style and grammar and so on, we might perhaps not obtain any-

thing comparable to the real Shelley ; and I conceive it to be a good service to his memory to restore in every instance what he wrote or meant to write. I have therefore adopted as a principle, that it is better to leave unchanged any doubtful passage, about which there may be several opinions, and which is not, as a matter of certainty, corrupt.

Corrupt as nearly all the posthumous texts of Shelley certainly are, the course of my studies has led me to think that the original editions are not nearly so corrupt as they are generally said to be, or as might be expected, and also that much has been called corrupt which is really nothing but elliptical, or unusual in point of grammar, of construction, of orthography, or of punctuation. Sufficient allowance has not been made for unusual features of Shelley's work which were deliberate, or which he would have seen no reason, as far as we can judge, for altering. To take as an example a single curious instance of seeming inconsistency, I would draw attention to his use of the interjection *O* or *Oh*. Throughout his works *O* and *Oh* are used interchangeably without any apparent rule ; and, more than this, they are sometimes followed by a comma, sometimes by no stop at all, sometimes by a note of exclamation. To me it appears most objectionable to interfere with this irregularity. Whatever Shelley's view on this small but important word may have been, I do not presume to think he unerringly carried out that view in writing ; but *O* is so constantly used within a line or two of *Oh*, that I cannot think he would have left so many of these divergences of practice had they been wholly unintentional. Of the half-dozen different ways of using the two forms of interjection, no two, if minutely considered, are of precisely the same metric value ; and it is hardly fantastic to suppose that a slightly different intonation or stress is indicated by these slightly different interjections, though Shelley may have been wholly unconscious of any intention in the matter, and have simply written in each case what seemed to convey the weight of thought and word his mind was uttering.

The bearing on metric effect of what at first sight may appear to be mere slovenlinesses of grammar, orthography, and punctuation, is not easy to estimate in the case of so subtle a master of music as Shelley : I suspect his punctuation often depended more

on euphony than on grammar; and it must always be intrinsically safer to leave the text as it is in these minute particulars than to tamper with it, unless there be a strong presumption that it has become corrupt since it left his hands. At all events, not only has this seemed to me *safer* and more in accordance with editorial obligations; but I have even thought it well worth while to preserve in the present text so much of the minute history of Shelley's mind as is unfolded to us in the peculiarities and inconsistencies of his orthography &c.,—at least when it has seemed likely that the orthography &c. were his, and deliberately adopted. But here again there are difficulties; for occasionally we come upon divergences of practice for which there is double and conflicting authority. In such cases, if I find clear evidence of a certain rule recognized by Shelley, I do not hesitate to apply his rule in correction of the text even where there is some sort of manuscript authority against the change,—because very often the manuscript giving such authority is either hastily dashed off or seemingly immature, and the change such as the poet might reasonably be expected to have made when reading the proof-sheets, or whenever he discovered the departure from his own rule. I have of course often left the punctuation or orthography of the text as I found it, even in cases where I have not been convinced of its being precisely as Shelley left it, but where the matter was of very little importance, *and could not possibly be decided.*

In the first volume of the present edition Shelley's various mature poetic issues are reprinted in chronological order, with the exact titles which he gave them, the dedications, mottoes, &c., and with the original arrangement of contents preserved. This plan seems to me to afford a marked artistic advantage. There is a decided interest in knowing precisely what Shelley thought appropriate as minor poems to append to his larger ones; and although this knowledge might of course be afforded even in a rearranged edition, still the effect must be lost in such an edition. That effect in such an instance as that of the poems issued with *Prometheus Unbound*, is simply magical. Never since the age dominated by the genius of Æschylus was anything of like lyric exaltation produced in dramatic literature; and never, perhaps,

since, in our poet's own words, "God first dawned on Chaos," had there been any human soul that "panted forth a flood of rapture so divine" as that incomparable group of lyrics which follow the incomparable fourth act of *Prometheus*,—still sounding in diverse echoing keys and under infinite variations of melody the same intense intellectual passion, the same most holy love of humanity, the same godlike perception of ideal beauty. A "flood of rapture" still more divine remained to crown the work of the master in *Epipsychidion*, and a still more certain grasp on the combined resources of the lyric and dramatic crafts was yet to be shewn in *Hellas*,—the one put forth by itself, the other with a single lyric of astonishing fitness; but the fact remains that the selection and arrangement of lyrics to accompany *Prometheus* was a thing unequalled in perceptiveness; and in that case, at all events, the highest importance is to be attached to the preservation of Shelley's order among these lesser poems,—lesser only than greater things of his own, and greater than anything lyric to be found elsewhere in modern literature. At the same time I have not hesitated to interpolate, between the poems published with *Alastor* and Shelley's next published poem *Mont Blanc*, the recently discovered Second Part of *The Daemon of the World*—so as to place the two parts of that redaction in sequence and leave the poem to be conveniently apprehended as a whole. To the mass of posthumous poems, translations, and juvenilia, no rigid principle of reproduction could be usefully applied; here an editor has a larger option; but of one thing I am convinced, that all distinctly immature work should form a separate chronology ending with *Queen Mab*. Shelley lived to protest against its being published at all; but, as it has now become an inalienable part of the world's possessions, all we can do out of respect to his memory is to assign to it the position which he assigned,—that of a juvenile work—albeit the book has had a more decided career than perhaps any other poem of striking immaturity in our literature.

It has seemed to me that the best plan for the arrangement of the rest of Shelley's poetry is to follow up the series of mature works published in his life-time, with the principal posthumous poems produced contemporaneously with that series; to place

next in order the small posthumous poems of the same period, grouped under separate years, as Mrs. Shelley grouped them; and to keep the translations apart, at the end of the mature works, and arrange them according to the chronology of the original authors.

In carrying out this arrangement I have innovated somewhat in the matter of fragments. The fact that a poem was unfinished did not with Shelley form *per se* an obstacle to its publication; for we have *A Vision of the Sea*, ending abruptly in the middle of a sentence, put forth by him in his life-time, as were also *The Daemon of the World* and *Superstition*; and the fragment of *Prince Athanase* was also sent for publication. Thus I have been obliged to introduce fragments into the chronological series of reprinted volumes; and it certainly seems to me better to follow the same principle in regard to the posthumous fragments, and group them with the poems of each year. I think they have a stronger interest so grouped than when separated and arranged in an independent chronology. They thus shew more readily what Shelley was doing, as far as we can ascertain, in the way of original poetry, in each year. For these reasons I have imported the *Fragments of an Unfinished Drama*, *Charles the First*, and *The Triumph of Life* into the series of principal posthumous poems; and for similar reasons I have placed cancelled passages, belonging obviously to given poems, immediately after such, instead of in a separate section.

The *Letter to Maria Gisborne* has been brought into the series of principal or more important posthumous poems, because, though comparatively short, it is among the most perfect and to my mind important of Shelley's smaller compositions, and is in some respects unlike all else.

It ought perhaps to be explained that the poems which are arranged between *Julian and Maddalo* and *The Mask of Anarchy*, namely *Prince Athanase* and a few lyrics, are so placed to carry out an intention expressed by Shelley: he told his publisher that *Prince Athanase* was to accompany *Julian and Maddalo*, and he afterwards sent for the same purpose some poems which he described as all his "saddest verses raked up into one heap." Both the specified works appeared for the first time in *Posthumous Poems*; and the rest here arranged in connexion with those

two are chosen from the same volume as answering to the description given above.

The question why there should be any need to do more than simply reprint those poems which were printed in the first instance under Shelley's own supervision, invites further consideration. We have heard enough and too much about Shelley's being "a careless writer,"—enough because such truth as there is in this current assertion has been long ago laid to heart by those who are discerning in such matters, and too much because very few are discerning, and the text that cost the greatest lyric poet of England infinite pains to elaborate has been held fair ground whereon every clumsy or thoughtless emendator (or rather innovator) might do just what suited his fancy.

If, therefore, we admit at all that Shelley was a careless writer, we must guard such admission round about with saving clauses, and clearly understand in what sense the intrinsically damaging word *careless* is used. That he would have done himself no credit before a Chinese board of examiners in pen-craft and orthography and the punctilio of smart composition, may be safely admitted; and those who would fain fit his compositions for presentation before such a board are not qualified by natural proclivity for the labour of editing the works of a great poet. But that he was careless as an artist in any sense in which it behoved such an one to be careful, is amply refuted by the fact for which Mr. Garnett vouches in the following striking paragraph from the *Relics of Shelley*, pages xi and xii:

"They [the pieces in the *Relics*] appear to have been hitherto overlooked, for the reason that must also serve as an excuse for the imperfect manner in which they are even now presented to the public—the extremely confused state of these books [Shelley's manuscript note-books], and the equal difficulty of deciphering and connecting their contents. Being written in great haste, and frequently with pencil, the hand-writing is often indistinct of itself; and rendered far more so by erasures and interlineations *ad infinitum*. Shelley appears to have composed with his pen in his hand, and to have corrected as fast as he wrote; hence a page full of writing frequently yields only two or three available lines, which must be painfully disentangled from a chaos of

obliterations. Much that at first sight wears the appearance of novelty, proves on inspection to be merely a variation of something already published; and sometimes the case is reversed, as in the *Prologue to Hellas*, so buried in the MS. of that drama (which has in itself on the average ten lines effaced for one retained), as to be only discoverable or separable upon very close scrutiny." Mr. Garnett adds a note to the effect that, when Shelley wrote for the printer, his handwriting was "singularly neat and beautiful"; and it seems to me that the proportion of lines rejected and lines retained in his rough drafts, taken in connexion with the quality of his "printer's copy," is the best possible proof of due care. As regards the statement that his drafts for the printer were beautifully written, I can confirm that from the evidence of the copy of *Julian and Maddalo* which he sent from Italy to Hunt, to have published: not only is the writing most careful and beautiful; but the punctuation is at once eminently characteristic and peculiar, and generally adequate and accurate from the poet's own point of view. This is still more noteworthy, inasmuch as Shelley wrote the poem out with his own hand twice at least, in ink. One copy is in a book among those in Sir Percy Shelley's possession; the other, on what seem to be the gilt-edged leaves of a pocket-book, is that already referred to, of which a specimen is given in fac-simile in the Library Edition.

That the confused note-books described by Mr. Garnett imply care, not the reverse, must be evident to any one who thinks for a moment: these were Shelley's means of putting his thoughts on record at once as they came burning upon him; and they were never meant for any one's guidance but his own. It was a need inherent in the fiery exaltation of his lyric mood that the result should be set down at once; and, for mere temporary *memoranda*, it mattered not how intricately one poem might be blended with another. He knew how to disentangle and write them fairly, or dictate them to Mrs. Shelley; and, had he lived to have the slightest suspicion how we should venerate every scrap of paper bearing the impress of his hand and pen, he would, we may be sure, have taken ample care to place these note-books beyond our reach.

The subject of Shelley's method of composition, a right under-

standing of which is the first requisite for any one aspiring to edit his works, would be a very fruitful theme for prolonged discussion. In one of the keenest and at the same time most enthusiastic of recent contributions to Shelley literature this theme is very happily touched upon. I refer to an article in *The Edinburgh Review* for April 1871, written *à propos* of Mr. Rossetti's edition of Shelley,—an article which I am authorized to connect with the name of Professor Thomas S. Baynes of St. Andrew's University, and which I cannot do better than quote.

"It is," says Professor Baynes, "a curious psychological problem how it is that amongst modern poets Shelley should be distinguished by his comparative neglect of minute verbal accuracy; how it comes to pass that the text even of poems which he himself carefully revised should be so extremely imperfect." Negligence, care, imperfection! This is a strange association of words; but in that association Professor Baynes seems to me to go right home to the facts of the case. The problem, he says, is, how it happens that in the poems which Shelley himself revised "there are grammatical laxities and metrical oversights, which are not only stumbling-blocks to readers of ordinary cultivation, but the despair of acute and accomplished verbal critics.

"This uncritical negligence, the want of minute accuracy in the details of his verse, seems to us intimately connected with the whole character of Shelley's mind, and especially with the lyrical sweep and intensity of his poetical genius. He had an intellect of the rarest delicacy and analytical strength, that intuitively perceived the most remote analogies, and discriminated with spontaneous precision the finest shades of sensibility, the subtlest differences of perception and emotion. He possessed a swift soaring and prolific imagination that clothed every thought and feeling with imagery in the moment of its birth, and instinctively read the spiritual meanings of material symbols. His fineness of sense was so exquisite that eye and ear and touch became, as it were, organs and inlets not merely of sensitive apprehension, but of intellectual beauty and ideal truth. Every nerve in his slight but vigorous frame seemed to vibrate in unison with the deeper life of nature in the world around him, and, like the wandering harp, he was swept to music by every breath of material beauty,

every gust of poetic emotion. Above all, he had a strength of intellectual passion and a depth of ideal sympathy that in moments of excitement fused all the powers of his mind into a continuous stream of creative energy, and gave the stamp of something like inspiration to all the higher productions of his muse. His very method of composition reflects these characteristics of his mind. He seems to have been urged by a sort of irresistible impulse to write, and displayed a vehement and passionate absorption in the work that recalls the old traditions of poetical frenzy and divine possession. His conceptions crowded so thickly upon him, were embodied in such exquisite verbal forms, and so enriched by illustrations flashed from remote and multiplied centres of association, that while the fever lasted his whole nature was carried impetuously forward on a full tide of mingled music and imagery. From this exuberance of poetical power some of his critics have reproached him with accumulating image upon image without pausing to select, discriminate, or contrast them. And it is no doubt true that there are passages in which metaphors and similes are heaped on each other in almost dazzling profusion. But even in his most opulent and ornate descriptions there is hardly a trace of conscious labour or deliberate effort. In his higher work the brilliant diction and splendid imagery glow with kindled emotion, and are wrought into the very substance of the poem by the sustained vehemence and rapture of his impassioned verse. Many of his most exquisite pieces were in this way produced almost at a sitting—at a single heat, as it were—and some of his longest poems, such as *The Revolt of Islam* and *The Cenci*, were completed in a few months. Once engrossed with a great poetical conception, all his powers were kindled to a pitch of the highest intensity, and amidst the crowding realities of imagination the whole world of sense grew pale and dim, and everything around became for the time unsubstantial as a dream.

“This power of complete and passionate absorption in an ideal world of his own had marked Shelley from his earliest years. The stories told of his boyhood and youth strikingly illustrate this feature of his character. . . Shelley himself, however, gives the most vivid picture of this abstracted mood in the description of the poet by one of the spirits in *Prometheus* :—

He will watch from dawn to gloom
The lake-reflected sun illumine
The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,
Nor heed nor see, what things they be ;
But from these create he can
Forms more real than living man,
Nurslings of immortality !

Shelley's 'nurslings of immortality' were produced in such seasons of rapt and exulting vision, and they bear in every part authentic and indelible marks of their origin. The verbal obscurities and metrical defects that have given his critics so much trouble are amongst these marks. The thoughts and feelings and images that crowded upon him he was in the habit of committing to paper with the utmost rapidity, and so that the expression was clear and rhythmical enough to be for the moment a kind of musical transcript of what was passing in his own mind, he was satisfied. He could not pause to elaborate the niceties of diction while new and stimulating thoughts, fresh and more brilliant images, were every moment pressing for utterance. If any difficulty as to word or phrase arose, instead of staying to remove it, he left a blank and passed on to embody the fresh visions of ethereal beauty that filled the inward eye before they again faded into the obscurity out of which they had so swiftly arisen. Or he would sometimes give within brackets tentative or alternative expressions, to be afterwards examined and decided on more at leisure. When he returned to revise and complete the unfinished or fragmentary piece, his mind evidently kindled afresh into something like its first ardour, and the work was matured under conditions of poetical excitement similar to those that accompanied its birth. And once fairly finished he busied himself to get the new creation of his brain printed as soon as possible. His eagerness to publish and the reason he gives for it are highly interesting and characteristic. 'If you ask me,' he says, writing to his friend Trelawny, 'why I publish what few 'or none will care to read, it is that the spirits I have raised haunt 'me until they are sent to the devil of a printer. . .' The real reason was, of course, that his mind being full of new conceptions he wanted to be free for fresh creative efforts. In this way, having once published a poem, he considered himself to have done

with it, and rarely attempted afterwards anything in the shape of critical revision. Nor in the first printing did he make any important alterations or correct the press with any great care."

In regard to the last sentence but one, it is right to remark that *The Revolt of Islam*, at all events, Shelley was anxious to revise for a second edition, and in fact enquired with some instance of Mr. Ollier whether an opportunity was likely to occur. "I have many corrections," he says (*Shelley Memorials*, page 153), "to make in it, and one part will be wholly remodelled." And again (page 159), "I could materially improve that poem on revision." I have been unable to ascertain that he ever carried out this project, though Medwin mentions having seen a revised copy. The circumstances must be taken for what they are worth in contemplating Shelley's mental attitude towards those works that he had seen safely launched from the press.

In the expression, "Nor in the first printing did he make any important alterations or correct the press with any great care," Professor Baynes does not of course imply any want of due earnestness; but here again I must partially dissent. The unique proof-leaf inserted in Shelley's own copy of *Laon and Cythna* seems to me to indicate modifications important enough; and I think there is at all events a strong probability that great fastidiousness, involving in the event pretty considerable revisions of the proof sheets, are at the root of the strikingly corrupt state of the original edition of *Laon and Cythna*. The *Alastor* volume bears no evidence of careless revision; and *The Cenci* and *Adonais*, printed in Italy under Shelley's own supervision expressly in order to avoid error, though characteristically inconsistent in minute details, shew remarkably few actual errors left undetected by Shelley. What he may have done in the way of modification on the proof-sheets, there are no *data* on which to form a hypothesis. With this note of partial dissent, I return to Professor Baynes's remarks; and they certainly qualify to some extent the expression from which I have dissented: "Not that Shelley was careless as to expression, or at all wanting in critical power. On the contrary, he had the finest instinct for language, which he had early cultivated so as to acquire a wonderful mastery over the more vivid, ideal, and expressive elements of

poetical diction. But for this, indeed, with his rapid habit of composition, eagerness to print, and neglect of all after revision, the verbal difficulties of his poems would be far more serious than they are. Again, his prose writings show that he possessed a critical faculty of the rarest delicacy and penetration, a power of philosophical analysis of the keenest edge and finest temper. But the persistent exercise of this faculty upon his own poetry would have required an amount of deliberation and delay, a coolness of temperament, a power of standing aloof from his own work and regarding it in a purely objective point of view wholly foreign to Shelley's nature. In seasons of inspiration he concentrated his whole soul on the work in hand, wrought strenuously to invest his poetical conceptions with 'the light of language,' and present them to the world in the most perfect form, and having done so he deliberately left them to their fate. To have occupied himself afterwards in touching and retouching the finished work would have been in his view a waste of time. Such careful and minute critical revision could in any case only be undertaken in intervals of leisure as a reaction and relief from creative effort. But Shelley was always producing; the completion of one poetical work being almost invariably followed by the commencement of another."

Still, we know that, before his poems went to the press he did not regard it as a waste of time to touch and retouch them; and I must confess I do not think he would ever have regarded as a waste of time the removal of anything that he recognized as a blemish. But our current notions on the subject of artistic blemishes are crude, narrow, and conventional; and I do not believe Shelley would have admitted as blemishes one fiftieth of the small inconsistencies of detail which his editors have been at so much pains to remove. It is perfectly true that, as Professor Baynes says, the longer poems rarely display "perfect evenness of verbal and metrical finish,"—Shelley's ideal of perfection being in fact something much higher than that,—so much so that we might as soon expect perfect evenness of utterance from his own inspirers the West Wind and the Skylark as from Shelley, whose highest technical feat was the production of works of art perfectly artless in aspect, and having the air rather of growth than of elaboration. "His finest passages," continues Professor Baynes, "have a

witchery of ærial music, an exquisiteness of ideal beauty, and a white intensity of spiritual passion. . . But the very qualities of mind and heart out of which these perfections spring carry with them the conditions of relative imperfection in the minor details of his work. The lyrical depth and impetuosity of feeling which carries Shelley on, and gives such freedom and grace to the poetical movement of his kindled thought, is unfavourable to perfect smoothness and accuracy in the mechanical details of his verse. He was often, in fact, too completely absorbed in the glorious substance of his poetry to give any minute attention to subordinate points of form. Thus, although from native fineness of ear his lines are never unrhythmical, the rhyme is often defective, and sometimes the metre as well. And while his thought, even in its most subtle refinements, is always lucid, the expression, from haste or extreme condensation, is sometimes far from being clear." I have freely quoted these remarks because they are admirable in themselves and appropriate to the subject in hand, and also because I think they enforce by implication the principles of editing which I have desired to follow. The lesson that we have to learn is that it was inherent in the very nature of Shelley's mind that certain unevennesses, inconsistencies, and divergences of practice should find place in his work, and that, instead of suspecting corruption where these occur, we should feel satisfied of incorruption, and do all in our power to preserve the fruit of his spirit intact,—not try to make it like the fruit of some other and lesser spirit.

I trust I have shewn that the word *careless* will not do to apply to Shelley's views of the attention to be bestowed on the details of his work. In any case it may be noted that the manuscripts of *Julian and Maddalo* and *The Mask of Anarchy* alone afford ample evidence on this point, and seem to me to shew that he took somewhat elaborate pains to redact and punctuate his poetry. I cannot doubt that, having set himself determinedly to go through the punctuation and minor detail of a fairly written poem about to go to press, he was only prevented from consistently revising it throughout, by getting once more implicated in the ardour of realization,—an ardour differing only in degree from that of composition. A curious instance of minute care presents itself in the manuscript of *The Mask of Anarchy*—written mainly by Mrs.

Shelley, but completed and revised by Shelley. In stanza xxix the second line seems on close examination to have been originally written by Mrs. Shelley thus—

A planet like the morning lay ;

which laxity, very likely to have been Shelley's in the ardour of composition, is carefully altered to the line in the text—

A planet, like the morning's, lay ;

and that this minute change was actually made with Shelley's hand, it needs no expert to decide beyond a doubt.

Traces of moments when minute care gave out (displaced according to my view by renewed ardour) occur in the manuscripts of both *Julian and Maddalo* and *The Mask*, and for that matter in numerous others which I have consulted ; but the general impression left on my mind is that, had Shelley lived to collect and revise his own poetical works, he would probably have produced a text that would have left very little for editors to do.

Concerning Mrs. Shelley's editions there is nothing to be said derogatory to the admiration and gratitude which we all owe her. It is not surprising that, in the proximity of so radiant a source of light, she should have seen no need for studying minutely the details of a series of texts, faulty from several causes, and irregular to some extent owing to changes of method on the part of the author. In her life-time the period had not arrived for the study of characteristic irregularities and changes in minute matters connected with Shelley's works ; and she had quite enough to do in searching out new poems and passages of poems from among the mass of confused and undigested manuscripts which he left. On the text itself she probably worked pretty hard : but the measure of original genius with which she was herself endowed, though marking her out for independent admiration, was rather a disqualification than otherwise for the editing of texts. Still, she must, through her intimate acquaintance with the mind and heart of Shelley, have been enabled to preserve and supply much of the spirit of his works that no one else could have seized in a situation similar to that in which she worked ; and it is also fair to assume that some of the more important variations between the original and posthumous editions of his poems rest on something more

than the intuition of his widow,—that she had, in some instances, manuscript authority for modifying passages in his poetry. That she also modified without such authority, there is no reasonable doubt; so that a re-editor has, necessarily, to use his own judgment, and whatever means are at his command, to discriminate between the authoritative and unauthoritative variations of Mrs. Shelley's editions from the originals. I have carefully collated every page of the originals with the two collected editions of 1839, and sometimes with later editions, and have adopted such verbal variations as seem to be improvements, and as have a decided air of authority; but the changes in orthography and punctuation shewn by the posthumous editions are, no doubt, as a rule unauthoritative, and probably, to a great extent, printing-house changes.

Beside the fact that Mrs. Shelley's editions are the only authority for much of the text of the posthumous works, we must remember that it is impossible to say how much of revision may have been floating in her mind from old experience of her husband's personal utterances,—what he may have noted in copies of his poems belonging to her, or what he may have said to her about general or special imperfections to be amended. And this consideration should make us careful in rejecting important changes made in her editions. I will not say that the two editions of 1839 must hold quite the same position in Shelley literature as Heming and Con-dell's folio of 1623 holds and will ever hold in Shakespeare literature,—I will not say this, because, for the bulk of Shelley's works, the earlier editions are certainly more authoritative than the later; but I do say that there is an analogy between the editions of 1839 and the folio of 1623,—which analogy will remain as long as the study of English literature lasts.

The remarks made thus far in connexion mainly with the text of such poems as were published during Shelley's life-time of course apply in a great degree to posthumous works also; but, in editing these, change of method necessarily arises from change of materials. The largest mass of posthumous poetry is the volume issued by Mrs. Shelley in 1824 under the title of *Posthumous Poems*; but this has been steadily followed by one instalment after another of more or less precious and wonderful poetry, up to the years immediately past; and even yet the process is not complete,

for there are still buried works of Shelley's. The volume of *Posthumous Poems* was followed by *The Mask of Anarchy* in 1832 and *The Shelley Papers* in 1833. The first collected edition of 1839 added somewhat to the known mass of Shelley's verse; and the second collection of that year added far more—among other additions giving the practically unpublished *Œdipus Tyrannus* and the absolutely unpublished *Peter Bell the Third*. Mrs. Shelley made no later additions, as far as I am aware; but the Lives by Medwin and Hogg added a little, and in 1862 there came Mr. Garnett's Relics. In 1870 Mr. W. M. Rossetti gave several pieces not before published; in 1876-7 there were still a few items left to make their first appearance in my Library Edition; and even the present edition has its contribution to the mass. Of some poems the text grew gradually under Mrs. Shelley's disentangling hand, some being incompletely issued in the volume of 1824 and added to afterwards; and in some cases the process of disentanglement has been carried on by later hands. In framing the present text, whatever posthumous work I have taken in the main from any of the several sources other than Mrs. Shelley's editions, I have submitted to a rigid collation with those editions whenever the poems occurred there as well as in the other books drawn upon. Such poems have, as Shelley's own issues have, been collated with both of Mrs. Shelley's editions of 1839. Indeed, in every case where further collation seemed desirable (and many such cases have presented themselves), several later editions also have been consulted; and wherever a manuscript has been available to me, I have collated the text with it word by word and point by point. In regard to any slight variation of this edition from the current texts, whether in orthography, punctuation, capitalling, or other minute particulars, it is to be understood in a general way that I have adopted the reading, either of the manuscript, or of one of Mrs. Shelley's editions. In the case of poems first given by Mr. Garnett and Mr. Rossetti, I have permitted myself some little liberty of variation from the text before me in these small details; and there is good reason for this slight relaxation: Mr. Garnett assures me that the manuscripts from which he has made transcripts have been very deficient in punctuation,—an assurance amply confirmed by my own experience; and as both

Mr. Garnett and Mr. Rossetti, who have given these transcripts to the public, disagree with me as to the utility of preserving Shelley's punctuation, I have not felt called upon to follow the pointing of the *Relics*, or of Mr. Rossetti's edition, as the case may be, but have punctuated the pieces as I should imagine Shelley punctuating them in a more advanced stage than that in which he left them. This has been to treat them as I must have done had the manuscripts been deciphered by myself instead of Mr. Garnett.

For the rest, before settling the text either of the first or of the second volume of this edition, I have carefully weighed every change made or proposed in the two-volume edition which Mr. Rossetti issued in 1870—always provided such change seemed to him important enough for record in a note. Truth to tell, the like has been done in regard to many changes not thus recorded; but it did not seem necessary to collate the text line by line with Mr. Rossetti's as with Mrs. Shelley's; nor have I made any rigorous examination of Mr. Rossetti's unannotated edition (Moxon's *Popular Poets*), or of the three-volume re-edition of 1878, the general tendency of which, so far as it varies from the edition of 1870, is in the direction, not of further emendation, but of reversion towards readings accepted before 1870. Mr. Rossetti adheres however to his view of systematizing the punctuation &c. from an external point of view, whereas it seems to me that, from the close inspection of manuscripts in various stages of advancement, a great deal as to Shelley's ways in small matters is to be learnt. The manuscripts often shew apparently trifling details that should, on my theory, be followed implicitly, as being intentional. Thus, in the careful manuscripts from which *Julian and Maddalo* and *The Mask of Anarchy* are given, it would be, if accidental, a very curious coincidence that the system of turned commas is precisely the same. In each poem, in the earlier part, where the speeches are short, the quotation-marks are repeated at the beginning of every line; but when in *Julian and Maddalo* we come to the monologue of the maniac, a single turned comma before each paragraph is made to suffice: similarly, when we come in *The Mask of Anarchy* to the invocation forming stanzas xxxvii to xci, the turned commas are at the beginning of each stanza only, and not of each line.

It may perhaps be expected that I should indicate more

particularly within what limits I have exercised the editorial prerogative. It has already been stated that in regard to the work issued in Shelley's life-time, conjecture has not been admitted. It remains to say, as regards the posthumous poems, that, wherever I have noticed certain words spelt otherwise than there is reason to believe Shelley spelt them, I have restored what I think his spelling: thus, *inchant*, being the spelling of that word for which I have found authority, that orthography has been adopted whenever *enchant* has been observed in the posthumous poems; and the same remark applies to *invoten* and *emvoen*. I have also, whenever the word *passed* has come under my notice, substituted *past*,—knowing that such was Shelley's habitual way of spelling the word. But, although these changes are made in the mature posthumous poems, they are not as a matter of course made in such of the *Juvenilia* as Shelley printed himself: there, the original forms are as a rule minutely preserved.

Finding good reason to think that words ending in *ize* were duly spelt by Shelley with a *z*, I have, whenever I have observed an *s* in that termination in the posthumous poems, substituted a *z*. Shelley's text has probably suffered in this respect from the same agency that is operating to the damage of other texts in this matter, to wit the persistent indolence of compositors, who, when "at case," can pick up an *s* with much less trouble than a *z*.

In the matter of quotations in Latin, Greek, and other foreign tongues, I have not sought to bring any scholastic interference to bear on what I have thought was deliberately written by Shelley: obvious printers' errors in these quotations, I have removed; but in other cases I have not thought it worth while to supply or correct accents and so on; for those who know more of the grammar of foreign tongues than Shelley did will not be misled,—those who know less will not be annoyed. In regard to the epigram from the Greek Anthology on the title-page of *Adonais* and the verses from Moschus at the head of the preface to that poem, as well as the quotations from Homer and Plutarch in the Notes to *Queen Mab*, the exact Greek scholar will find much to criticize; but I suspect these extracts give us pretty accurately the measure of Shelley's own exactness at the periods in question.

In the verses from Lucretius quoted at the head of *Queen Mab*, however, a printer's error, *juratque* for *juvatque*, has been corrected; but I have even left the titles of, and extracts from, French works as I found them in the *Queen Mab* Notes, the errors in accents &c. affording evidence as to Shelley's scholarship or accuracy in the year 1813, and having thus an intrinsic value for the student of the poet.

The only matter in which I have consciously departed from what I believe to have been Shelley's practice is that of past tenses and participles in *ed.* In this case accents have been supplied as a help to the reader whenever there was no doubt that the final syllable was meant to be separately sounded. To anyone technically familiar with the rhythmical manner of Shelley, this is almost always decided beyond a doubt by the scansion; but there are some few cases in which a line will scan equally well with the final *ed* mute or sounded. As far as I know Shelley never supplied the accents, so that wherever one occurs it is to be reckoned as a minute deviation from the original text.

For ease and simplicity of reference all poems exceeding in length a sonnet or fourteen lines have been numbered in the margins, unless already divided in the original editions into numbered stanzas, and indeed in some cases of long or irregular stanzas it has been thought useful to give a marginal numeration also; but no new numeration of stanzas has been introduced into Shelley's editions as reprinted in Volume I. Such helps as the insertion in the head-lines of "Canto I" &c., "Act I, Scene I" &c., are invariably given whether Shelley's editions give them or not; and I have sought to make the wording of the head-lines as useful as possible.

As a rule Shelley's own editions have been followed in the matter of indentations (or "indentions" as they are technically called); though of course there as elsewhere there are occasional errors to be corrected in working from his editions. In Volume II, in a general way, the setting of lines is arranged so that the "indentions" have some correspondence with the rhymes; but there are two forms of verse in which this plan has not been followed, — *terza rima* and the Sonnet. In printing the *terza rima* poems in simple groups of three lines, the present edition follows those

of Mrs. Shelley, who, I doubt not, followed in this respect the indication of Shelley's manuscripts,—especially as we find the same arrangement in the stanzas of cognate form employed in the *Ode to the West Wind*. In giving the sonnet without “indentions,” the invariable practice of Shelley's own printed volumes is followed; and in such of his manuscript sonnets as I have seen there are no intentional “indentions,”—merely the same irregularity of margin that we generally find in his manuscripts. As the writing of these two highly artificial forms of verse has ever been matter of much controversy and strong opinion, it is unlikely that Shelley's own way of writing them was unconsidered: it should therefore be followed.

Of the two fragments of verse which have not appeared in any edition of Shelley except the present, the *Fragment of a Satire on Satire* (Volume II, page 210) is reprinted from Professor Dowden's recent volume *The Correspondence of Robert Southey with Caroline Bowles*. Professor Dowden gave it from a transcript furnished to him by Mr. Garnett. The *Lines to William Godwin* (Volume II, page 162) have not, I believe, been printed before: they were written by Shelley on a letter addressed to him by Godwin, dated “Skinner Street, Apr. 29, 1817,” proposing an eligible investment for Shelley which was also to benefit Godwin, and suggesting a subscription for the payment of the Hunts' fine. The lines seem to be a poetic comment on the situation of Godwin—an eagle caught by night, facing and defying tempests. The couplet in *Hellas* (lines 76-7)—

As an eagle fed with morning
Scorns the embattled tempests' warning,

will at once recur to readers of this fragment; and it is most remarkable that this figure should have remained so long in Shelley's mind.

H. BUXTON FORMAN.

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BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL NOTES

BY

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY.

T

A further issue of the present unannotated edition of Shelley's Poetry being required, I have taken the opportunity of adding the preface and notes critical and biographical from Mrs. Shelley's editions of 1839. These notes, in a connected series, as printed in the present edition and in the current issue of my annotated library edition, form a study of the poet interesting in a high degree and of unquestionable authority in regard to essential matters,—although the gifted author would have been the first to disclaim the adequacy of this study as a memoir of Shelley, more particularly on account of her want of materials for the early portion of his life, referred to at page xxxviii.

H. B. F.

CHRISTMAS 1885.

BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL NOTES

BY

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY.¹

P R E F A C E.

OBSTACLES have long existed to my presenting the public with a perfect edition of Shelley's Poems. These being at last happily removed, I hasten to fulfil an important duty,—that of giving the productions of a sublime genius to the world, with all the correctness possible, and of, at the same time, detailing the history of those productions, as they sprung, living and warm, from his heart and brain. I abstain from any remark on the occurrences of his private life; except, inasmuch as the passions which they engendered, inspired his poetry. This is not the time to relate the truth; and I should reject any colouring of the truth. No account of these events has ever been given at all approaching reality in their details, either as regards himself or others; nor shall I further allude to them than to remark, that the errors of action, committed by a man as noble and generous as Shelley, may, as far as he only is concerned, be fearlessly avowed, by those who loved him, in the firm conviction, that were they judged impartially, his character would stand in fairer and brighter light than that of any

¹ Mrs. Shelley's foot-notes are distinguished by the initials *M. S.* from

such notes as I have found it necessary to add.—H. B. F.

contemporary. Whatever faults he had, ought to find extenuation among his fellows, since they proved him to be human; without them, the exalted nature of his soul would have raised him into something divine.

The qualities that struck any one newly introduced to Shelley, were, first, a gentle and cordial goodness that animated his intercourse with warm affection, and helpful sympathy. The other, the eagerness and ardour with which he was attached to the cause of human happiness and improvement; and the fervent eloquence with which he discussed such subjects. His conversation was marked by its happy abundance, and the beautiful language in which he clothed his poetic ideas and philosophical notions. To defecate life of its misery and its evil, was the ruling passion of his soul: he dedicated to it every power of his mind, every pulsation of his heart. He looked on political freedom as the direct agent to effect the happiness of mankind; and thus any new-sprung hope of liberty inspired a joy and an exultation more intense and wild than he could have felt for any personal advantage. Those who have never experienced the workings of passion on general and unselfish subjects cannot understand this; and it must be difficult of comprehension to the younger generation rising around, since they cannot remember the scorn and hatred with which the partisans of reform were regarded some few years ago, nor the persecutions to which they were exposed. He had been from youth the victim of the state of feeling inspired by the reaction of the French Revolution; and believing firmly in the justice and excellence of his views, it cannot be wondered that a nature as sensitive, as impetuous, and as generous as his, should put its whole force into the attempt to alleviate for others the evils of those systems from which he had himself suffered. Many advantages attended his birth; he spurned them all when balanced with what he considered his duties. He was generous to imprudence, devoted to heroism.

These characteristics breathe throughout his poetry. The struggle for human weal; the resolution firm to martyrdom; the impetuous pursuit; the glad triumph in good; the determination not to despair. Such were the features that

marked those of his works which he regarded with most complacency, as sustained by a lofty subject and useful aim.

In addition to these, his poems may be divided into two classes,—the purely imaginative, and those which sprung from the emotions of his heart. Among the former may be classed "The Witch of Atlas," "Adonais," and his latest composition, left imperfect, "The Triumph of Life." In the first of these particularly, he gave the reins to his fancy, and luxuriated in every idea as it rose; in all, there is that sense of mystery which formed an essential portion of his perception of life—a clinging to the subtler inner spirit, rather than to the outward form—a curious and metaphysical anatomy of human passion and perception.

The second class is, of course, the more popular, as appealing at once to emotions common to us all; some of these rest on the passion of love; others on grief and despondency; others on the sentiments inspired by natural objects. Shelley's conception of love was exalted, absorbing, allied to all that is purest and noblest in our nature, and warmed by earnest passion; such it appears when he gave it a voice in verse. Yet he was usually averse to expressing these feelings, except when highly idealized; and many of his more beautiful effusions he had cast aside, unfinished, and they were never seen by me till after I had lost him. Others, as for instance, "Rosalind and Helen," and "Lines written among the Euganean Hills," I found among his papers by chance; and with some difficulty urged him to complete them. There are others, such as the "Ode to the Sky Lark," and "The Cloud," which, in the opinion of many critics, bear a purer poetical stamp than any other of his productions. They were written as his mind prompted, listening to the carolling of the bird, aloft in the azure sky of Italy; or marking the cloud as it sped across the heavens, while he floated in his boat on the Thames.

No poet was ever warmed by a more genuine and unforced inspiration. His extreme sensibility gave the intensity of passion to his intellectual pursuits; and rendered his mind keenly alive to every perception of outward objects, as well as to his internal sensations. Such a gift is, among the sad

vicissitudes of human life, the disappointments we meet, and the galling sense of our own mistakes and errors, fraught with pain; to escape from such, he delivered up his soul to poetry, and felt happy when he sheltered himself from the influence of human sympathies, in the wildest regions of fancy. His imagination has been termed too brilliant, his thoughts too subtle. He loved to idealize reality; and this is a taste shared by few. We are willing to have our passing whims exalted into passions, for this gratifies our vanity; but few of us understand or sympathize with the endeavour to ally the love of abstract beauty, and adoration of abstract good, the *τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ καλὸν* of the Socratic philosophers, with our sympathies with our kind. In this Shelley resembled Plato; both taking more delight in the abstract and the ideal, than in the special and tangible. This did not result from imitation; for it was not till Shelley resided in Italy that he made Plato his study; he then translated his *Symposium* and his *Ion*; and the English language boasts of no more brilliant composition, than Plato's *Praise of Love*, translated by Shelley. To return to his own poetry. The luxury of imagination, which sought nothing beyond itself, as a child burthens itself with spring flowers, thinking of no use beyond the enjoyment of gathering them, often showed itself in his verses: they will be only appreciated by minds which have resemblance to his own; and the mystic subtlety of many of his thoughts will share the same fate. The metaphysical strain that characterizes much of what he has written, was, indeed, the portion of his works to which, apart from those whose scope was to awaken mankind to aspirations for what he considered the true and good, he was himself particularly attached. There is much, however, that speaks to the many. When he would consent to dismiss these huntings after the obscure, which, entwined with his nature as they were, he did with difficulty, no poet ever expressed in sweeter, more heart-reaching, or more passionate verse, the gentler or more forcible emotions of the soul.

A wise friend¹ once wrote to Shelley, "You are still very

¹ This was Mrs. Shelley's father, William Godwin.

young, and in certain essential respects you do not yet sufficiently perceive that you are so." It is seldom that the young know what youth is, till they have got beyond its period; and time was not given him to attain this knowledge. It must be remembered that there is the stamp of such inexperience on all he wrote; he had not completed his nine-and-twentieth¹ year when he died. The calm of middle life did not add the seal of the virtues which adorn maturity to those generated by the vehement spirit of youth. Through life also he was a martyr to ill health, and constant pain wound up his nerves to a pitch of susceptibility that rendered his views of life different from those of a man in the enjoyment of healthy sensations. Perfectly gentle and forbearing in manner, he suffered a good deal of internal irritability, or rather excitement, and his fortitude to bear was almost always on the stretch; and thus, during a short life, had gone through more experience of sensation, than many whose existence is protracted. "If I die to-morrow," he said, on the eve of his unanticipated death, "I have lived to be older than my father." The weight of thought and feeling burdened him heavily; you read his sufferings in his attenuated frame, while you perceived the mastery he held over them in his animated countenance and brilliant eyes.

He died, and the world showed no outward sign; but his influence over mankind, though slow in growth, is fast augmenting, and in the ameliorations that have taken place in the political state of his country, we may trace in part the operation of his arduous struggles. His spirit gathers peace in its new state from the sense that, though late, his exertions were not made in vain, and in the progress of the liberty he so fondly loved.

He died, and his place among those who knew him intimately, has never been filled up. He walked beside them like a spirit of good to comfort and benefit—to enlighten the darkness of life with irradiations of genius, to cheer it with his sympathy and love. Any one, once

¹ As Shelley was born on the 4th of August 1792, and was drowned on the 8th of July 1822, we should of

course read *thirtieth* for *nine-and-twentieth*.

attached to Shelley, must feel all other affections, however true and fond, as wasted on barren soil in comparison. It is our best consolation to know that such a pure-minded and exalted being was once among us, and now exists where we hope one day to join him;—although the intolerant, in their blindness, poured down anathemas, the Spirit of Good, who can judge the heart, never rejected him.

In the notes appended to the poems, I have endeavoured to narrate the origin and history of each. The loss of nearly all letters and papers which refer to his early life, renders the execution more imperfect than it would otherwise have been. I have, however, the liveliest recollection of all that was done and said during the period of my knowing him. Every impression is as clear as if stamped yesterday, and I have no apprehension of any mistake in my statements as far as they go. In other respects, I am, indeed, incompetent; but I feel the importance of the task, and regard it as my most sacred duty. I endeavour to fulfil it in a manner he would himself approve; and hope in this publication to lay the first stone of a monument due to Shelley's genius, his sufferings, and his virtues:

S' al seguir son tarda,
Forse avverrà che 'l bel nome gentile
Consacrerò con questa stanca penna.

POSTSCRIPT.

IN revising this new edition,¹ and carefully consulting Shelley's scattered and confused papers, I found a few fragments which had hitherto escaped me, and was enabled to complete a few poems hitherto left unfinished. What at one time escapes the searching eye, dimmed by its own earnestness, becomes clear at a future period. By the aid of a friend I also present some poems complete and correct, which hitherto have been defaced by various mistakes and omissions. It was suggested that the Poem "To the Queen of my Heart," was falsely attributed to Shelley. I certainly find no trace of it among his papers, and as those of his

¹ The edition referred to is the second edition of 1839.

intimate friends whom I have consulted never heard of it, I omit it.¹

Two Poems are added of some length, "Swellfoot the Tyrant," and "Peter Bell the Third." I have mentioned the circumstances under which they were written in the notes; and need only add, that they are conceived in a very different spirit from Shelley's usual compositions. They are specimens of the burlesque and fanciful; but although they adopt a familiar style and homely imagery, there shine through the radiance of the poet's imagination the earnest views and opinions of the politician and the moralist.

At my request the publisher has restored the omitted passages of *Queen Mab*.—I now present this edition as a complete collection of my husband's poetical works, and I do not foresee that I can hereafter add to or take away a word or line.

Putney, November 6th, 1839.

QUEEN MAB.

SHELLEY was eighteen² when he wrote "*Queen Mab*:" he never published it. When it was written, he had come to the decision that he was too young to be a "judge of controversies;" and he was desirous of acquiring "that sobriety of spirit which is the characteristic of true heroism." But he never doubted the truth or utility of his opinions; and in printing and privately distributing "*Queen Mab*" he believed that he should further their dissemination, without occasioning the mischief either to others or himself that might arise from publication. It is doubtful whether he would himself have admitted it into a collection of his works. His severe classical taste, refined by the constant study of the Greek poets, might have discovered defects that

¹ It is retained in this edition because I have found no sufficient evidence to weigh against that of Medwin, who published it as Shelley's.

² This corresponds with Shelley's own account. But there seems to be some misapprehension on the subject

escape the ordinary reader, and the change his opinions underwent in many points, would have prevented him from putting forth the speculations of his boyish days. But the poem is too beautiful in itself, and far too remarkable as the production of a boy of eighteen, to allow of its being passed over: besides that having been frequently reprinted, the omission would be vain. In the former edition certain portions were left out, as shocking the general reader from the violence of their attack on religion. I myself had a painful feeling that such erasures might be looked upon as a mark of disrespect towards the author, and am glad to have the opportunity of restoring them. The notes also are reprinted entire; not because they are models of reasoning or lessons of truth; but because Shelley wrote them. And that all that a man, at once so distinguished and so excellent, ever did, deserves to be preserved. The alterations his opinions underwent ought to be recorded, for they form his history.

A series of articles was published in the "New Monthly Magazine," during the autumn of the year 1832, written by a man of great talent,¹ a fellow collegian and warm friend of Shelley: they describe admirably the state of his mind during his collegiate life. Inspired with ardour for the acquisition of knowledge; endowed with the keenest sensibility, and with the fortitude of a martyr, Shelley came among his fellow-creatures, congregated for the purposes of education, like a spirit from another sphere, too delicately organized for the rough treatment man uses towards man, especially in the season of youth; and too resolute in carrying out his own sense of good and justice not to become a victim. To a devoted attachment to those he loved, he added a determined resistance to oppression. Refusing to fag at Eton, he was treated with revolting cruelty by masters and boys: this roused, instead of taming his spirit, and he rejected the duty of obedience, when it was enforced by menaces and punishment. To aversion to the society of his fellow-creatures, such as he found them when collected together in societies, where one egged on the other to acts of

¹ Thomas Jefferson Hogg.

tyranny, was joined the deepest sympathy and compassion: while the attachment he felt for individuals and the admiration with which he regarded their powers and their virtues, led him to entertain a high opinion of the perfectibility of human nature, and he believed that all could reach the highest grade of moral improvement, did not the customs and prejudices of society foster evil passions, and excuse evil actions.

The oppression which, trembling at every nerve yet resolute to heroism, it was his ill fortune to encounter at school and at college, led him to dissent in all things from those whose arguments were blows, whose faith appeared to engender blame and hatred. "During my existence," he wrote to a friend in 1812, "I have incessantly speculated, thought, and read." His readings were not always well chosen; among them were the works of the French philosophers; as far as metaphysical argument went, he temporarily became a convert. At the same time, it was the cardinal article of his faith, that if men were but taught and induced to treat their fellows with love, charity, and equal rights, this earth would realize Paradise. He looked upon religion as it is professed, and, above all, practised, as hostile, instead of friendly, to the cultivation of those virtues, which would make men brothers.

Can this be wondered at? At the age of seventeen,¹ fragile in health and frame, of the purest habits in morals, full of devoted generosity and universal kindness, glowing with ardour to attain wisdom, resolved at every personal sacrifice to do right, burning with a desire for affection and sympathy,—he was treated as a reprobate, cast forth as a criminal.

The cause was, that he was sincere; that he believed the opinions which he entertained, to be true; and he loved truth with a martyr's love: he was ready to sacrifice station and fortune, and his dearest affections, at its shrine. The sacrifice was demanded from, and made by, a youth of

¹ If the reference is, as it would seem to be, to Shelley's expulsion from Oxford in March 1811, we should read

between eighteen and nineteen instead of seventeen.

seventeen. It is a singular fact in the history of society in the civilized nations of modern times, that no false step is so irretrievable as one made in early youth. Older men, it is true, when they oppose their fellows, and transgress ordinary rules, carry a certain prudence or hypocrisy as a shield along with them. But youth is rash: nor can it imagine, while asserting what it believes to be true, and doing what it believes to be right, that it should be denounced as vicious, and pursued as a criminal.

Shelley possessed a quality of mind which experience has shown me to be of the rarest occurrence among human beings: this was his *unworldliness*. The usual motives that rule men, prospects of present or future advantage, the rank and fortune of those around, the taunts and censures, or the praise of those who were hostile to him, had no influence whatever over his actions, and apparently none over his thoughts. It is difficult even to express the simplicity and directness of purpose that adorned him. Some few might be found in the history of mankind, and some one at least among his own friends, equally disinterested and scornful, even to severe personal sacrifices, of every baser motive. But no one, I believe, ever joined this noble but passive virtue to equal active endeavours, for the benefit of his friends and mankind in general, and to equal power to produce the advantages he desired. The world's brightest gauds, and its most solid advantages, were of no worth in his eyes, when compared to the cause of what he considered truth, and the good of his fellow-creatures. Born in a position which, to his inexperienced mind, afforded the greatest facilities to practise the tenets he espoused, he boldly declared the use he would make of fortune and station, and enjoyed the belief that he should materially benefit his fellow-creatures by his actions; while, conscious of surpassing powers of reason and imagination, it is not strange that he should, even while so young, have believed that his written thoughts would tend to disseminate opinions, which he believed conducive to the happiness of the human race.

If man were a creature devoid of passion, he might have said and done all this with quietness. But he was too enthusiastic, and too full of hatred of all the ills he witnessed,

not to scorn danger. Various disappointments tortured, but could not tame, his soul. The more enmity he met, the more earnestly he became attached to his peculiar views, and hostile to those of the men who persecuted him.

He was animated to greater zeal by compassion for his fellow-creatures. His sympathy was excited by the misery with which the world is bursting. He witnessed the sufferings of the poor, and was aware of the evils of ignorance. He desired to induce every rich man to despoil himself of superfluity, and to create a brotherhood of property and service, and was ready to be the first to lay down the advantages of his birth. He was of too uncompromising a disposition to join any party. He did not in his youth look forward to gradual improvement: nay, in those days of intolerance, now almost forgotten, it seemed as easy to look forward to the sort of millennium of freedom and brotherhood, which he thought the proper state of mankind, as to the present reign of moderation and improvement. Ill health made him believe that his race would soon be run; that a year or two was all he had of life. He desired that these years should be useful and illustrious. He saw, in a fervent call on his fellow-creatures to share alike the blessings of the creation, to love and serve each other, the noblest work that life and time permitted him. In this spirit he composed *QUEEN MAB*.

He was a lover of the wonderful and wild in literature; but had not fostered these tastes at their genuine sources—the romances and chivalry of the middle ages; but in the perusal of such German works as were current in those days. Under the influence of these, he, at the age of fifteen,¹ wrote two short prose romances of slender merit. The sentiments and language were exaggerated, the composition imitative and poor. He wrote also a poem on the subject of Ahasuerus—being led to it by a German fragment he picked up, dirty and torn, in Lincoln's-inn-Fields. This fell afterwards into other hands—and was considerably altered before it was printed. Our earlier English poetry was almost unknown

¹ The reference may be presumed to be to *Zastrozzi* and *St. Irvyne*. If so it is probable that the age is inad-

vertently understated here also, as in the case noted at p. xli.

to him. The love and knowledge of nature developed by Wordsworth—the lofty melody and mysterious beauty of Coleridge’s poetry—and the wild fantastic machinery and gorgeous scenery adopted by Southey, composed his favourite reading; the rhythm of *Queen Mab* was founded on that of *Thalaba*, and the first few lines bear a striking resemblance in spirit, though not in idea, to the opening of that poem. His fertile imagination, and ear, tuned to the finest sense of harmony, preserved him from imitation. Another of his favourite books was the poem of *Gebir*, by Walter Savage Landor. From his boyhood he had a wonderful facility of versification which he carried into another language, and his Latin school verses were composed with an ease and correctness that procured for him prizes—and caused him to be resorted to by all his friends for help. He was, at the period of writing *Queen Mab*, a great traveller within the limits of England, Scotland, and Ireland. His time was spent among the loveliest scenes of these countries. Mountain and lake and forest were his home; the phenomena of nature were his favourite study. He loved to inquire into their causes, and was addicted to pursuits of natural philosophy and chemistry, as far as they could be carried on, as an amusement. These tastes gave truth and vivacity to his descriptions, and warmed his soul with that deep admiration for the wonders of Nature which constant association with her inspired.

He never intended to publish *Queen Mab* as it stands; but a few years after, when printing *Alastor*, he extracted a small portion which he entitled “*The Dæmon of the World* :” in this he changed somewhat the versification—and made other alterations scarcely to be called improvements.¹

Some years after, when in Italy, a bookseller published an edition of *Queen Mab* as it originally stood. Shelley was hastily written to by his friends, under the idea that, deeply injurious as the mere distribution of the poem had proved, the publication might awaken fresh persecutions. At the

¹ Mrs. Shelley extracted here as a specimen, and as characteristic of Shelley’s state of mind, the *Invoca-*

tion to the Soul of Ianthe as altered in *The Dæmon of the World*. It will be found at pp. 32-3 of this volume.

suggestion of these friends he wrote a letter on the subject, printed in "The Examiner" newspaper—with which I close this history of his earliest work.

*To the Editor of THE EXAMINER.*¹

SIR,—Having heard that a poem, entitled *Queen Mab*, has been surreptitiously published in London, and that legal proceedings have been instituted against the publisher, I request the favour of your insertion of the following explanation of the affair as it relates to me.

A poem, entitled *Queen Mab*, was written by me at the age of eighteen,² I dare say in a sufficiently intemperate spirit—but even then was not intended for publication, and a few copies only were struck off, to be distributed among my personal friends. I have not seen this production for several years: I doubt not but that it is perfectly worthless in point of literary composition; and that in all that concerns moral and political speculation, as well as in the subtler discriminations of metaphysical and religious doctrine, it is still more crude and immature. I am a devoted enemy to religious, political, and domestic oppression; and I regret this publication, not so much from literary vanity, as because I fear it is better fitted to injure than to serve the cause of freedom. I have directed my solicitor to apply to Chancery for an injunction to restrain the sale; but after the precedent of Mr. Southey's *Wat Tyler* (a poem, written, I believe, at the same age, and with the same unreflecting enthusiasm), with little hopes of success.

Whilst I exonerate myself from all share in having divulged opinions hostile to existing sanctions, under the form, whatever it may be, which they assume in this poem, it is scarcely necessary for me to protest against the system of inculcating the truth of Christianity and the excellence of Monarchy, however true or however excellent they may be, by such equivocal arguments as confiscation,

¹ This letter appeared in *The Examiner* for the 15th of July, 1821.

² Concerning this statement, see note at p. xxxix.

and imprisonment, and invective, and slander, and the insolent violation of the most sacred ties of nature and society.

Sir, I am,

Your obliged and obedient servant,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

Pisa, June 22, 1821.¹

ALASTOR.

"ALASTOR" is written in a very different tone from "Queen Mab." In the latter, Shelley poured out all the cherished speculations of his youth—all the irrepressible emotions of sympathy, censure, and hope, to which the present suffering, and what he considers the proper destiny of his fellow-creatures, gave birth. "Alastor," on the contrary, contains an individual interest only. A very few years, with their attendant events, had checked the ardour of Shelley's hopes, though he still thought them well grounded, and that to advance their fulfilment was the noblest task man could achieve.

This is neither the time nor place to speak of the misfortunes that chequered his life. It will be sufficient to say,

¹ In a letter to Mr. Gisborne dated the 16th of June 1821 (*Essays &c.*, 1840, Vol. II, p. 296), Shelley says:—"A droll circumstance has occurred. Queen Mab, a poem written by me when very young, in the most furious style, with long notes against Jesus Christ, and God the Father, and the King, and bishops, and marriage, and the devil knows what, is just published by one of the low booksellers in the Strand, against my wish and consent, and all the people are at loggerheads about it. H.S. [Horace Smith] gives me this account. You may imagine how much I am amused. For the sake of a dignified appearance, however, and really because I wish to protest against all the bad

poetry in it, I have given orders to say that it is all done against my desire, and have directed my attorney to apply to Chancery for an injunction, which he will not get." In a letter to Horace Smith, dated the 14th of September 1821 (*Essays &c.*, 1840, Vol. II, p. 331), Shelley says:—"If you happen to have bought a copy of Clarke's edition of Queen Mab for me, I should like very well to see it.—I really hardly know what this poem is about. I am afraid it is rather rough." Notwithstanding this ignorance as to what *Queen Mab* was about, Shelley had characterized it as "villainous trash" in a letter to Mr. Ollier, dated the 11th of June 1821, quoted in the *Shelley Memorials*, at pp. 53 and 160-1.

that in all he did, he at the time of doing it believed himself justified to his own conscience; while the various ills of poverty and loss of friends brought home to him the sad realities of life. Physical suffering had also considerable influence in causing him to turn his eyes inward; inclining him rather to brood over the thoughts and emotions of his own soul, than to glance abroad, and to make, as in "Queen Mab," the whole universe the object and subject of his song. In the spring of 1815, an eminent physician pronounced that he was dying rapidly of a consumption; abscesses were formed on his lungs, and he suffered acute spasms. Suddenly a complete change took place; and though through life he was a martyr to pain and debility, every symptom of pulmonary disease vanished. His nerves, which nature had formed sensitive to an unexampled degree, were rendered still more susceptible by the state of his health.

As soon as the peace of 1814 had opened the Continent he went abroad. He visited some of the more magnificent scenes of Switzerland, and returned to England from Lucerne, by the Reuss and the Rhine. This river navigation enchanted him. In his favourite poem of "Thalaba," his imagination had been excited by a description of such a voyage. In the summer of 1815, after a tour along the southern coast of Devonshire and a visit to Clifton, he rented a house on Bishopgate Heath, on the borders of Windsor Forest, where he enjoyed several months of comparative health and tranquil happiness. The later summer months were warm and dry. Accompanied by a few friends, he visited the source of the Thames, making the voyage in a wherry from Windsor to Cricklade. His beautiful stanzas in the churchyard of Lechlade were written on that occasion. "Alastor" was composed on his return. He spent his days under the oak-shades of Windsor Great Park; and the magnificent woodland was a fitting study to inspire the various descriptions of forest scenery we find in the poem.

None of Shelley's poems is more characteristic than this. The solemn spirit that reigns throughout, the worship of the majesty of nature, the broodings of a poet's heart in solitude—the mingling of the exulting joy which the various aspect of the visible universe inspires, with the sad and struggling

pangs which human passion imparts, give a touching interest to the whole. The death which he had often contemplated during the last months as certain and near, he here represented in such colours as had, in his lonely musings, soothed his soul to peace. The versification sustains the solemn spirit which breathes throughout: it is peculiarly melodious. The poem ought rather to be considered didactic than narrative: it was the out-pouring of his own emotions, embodied in the purest form he could conceive, painted in the ideal hues which his brilliant imagination inspired, and softened by the recent anticipation of death.

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM.

SHELLEY possessed two remarkable qualities of intellect—a brilliant imagination and a logical exactness of reason. His inclinations led him (he fancied) almost alike to poetry and metaphysical discussions. I say “he fancied,” because I believe the former to have been paramount, and that it would have gained the mastery even had he struggled against it. However, he said that he deliberated at one time whether he should dedicate himself to poetry or metaphysics, and resolving on the former, he educated himself for it, discarding in a great measure his philosophical pursuits, and engaging himself in the study of the poets of Greece, Italy, and England. To these may be added a constant perusal of portions of the Old Testament—the Psalms, the book of Job, the Prophet Isaiah, and others, the sublime poetry of which filled him with delight.

As a poet, his intellect and compositions were powerfully influenced by exterior circumstances, and especially by his place of abode. He was very fond of travelling, and ill health increased this restlessness. The sufferings occasioned by a cold English winter, made him pine, especially when our colder spring arrived, for a more genial climate. In 1816 he again visited Switzerland, and rented a house on the banks of the lake of Geneva; and many a day, in cloud or sunshine, was passed alone in his boat—sailing as the wind listed, or weltering on the calm waters. The majestic aspect

of nature ministered such thoughts as he afterwards enwove in verse. His lines on the Bridge of the Arve, and his Hymn to Intellectual Beauty, were written at this time. Perhaps during this summer his genius was checked by association with another poet whose nature was utterly dissimilar to his own, yet who, in the poem he wrote at that time, gave tokens ^{that} he shared for a period the more abstract and etherialized inspiration of Shelley. The saddest events awaited his return to England; but such was his fear to wound the feelings of others, that he never expressed the anguish he felt, and seldom gave vent to the indignation roused by the persecutions he underwent; while the course of deep unexpressed passion, and the sense of injury, engendered the desire to embody themselves in forms defecated of all the weakness and evil which cling to real life.

He chose therefore for his hero a youth nourished in dreams of liberty, some of whose actions are in direct opposition to the opinions of the world; but who is animated throughout by an ardent love of virtue, and a resolution to confer the boons of political and intellectual freedom on his fellow-creatures. He created for this youth a woman such as he delighted to imagine—full of enthusiasm for the same objects; and they both, with will unvanquished and the deepest sense of the justice of their cause, met adversity and death. There exists in this poem a memorial of a friend of his youth. The character of the old man who liberates Laon from his tower-prison, and tends on him in sickness, is founded on that of Doctor Lind, who, when Shelley was at Eton, had often stood by to befriend and support him, and whose name he never mentioned without love and veneration.

During the year 1817, we were established at Marlow, in Buckinghamshire. Shelley's choice of abode was fixed chiefly by this town being at no great distance from London, and its neighbourhood to the Thames. The poem was written in his boat, as it floated under the beech groves of Bisham, or during wanderings in the neighbouring country, which is distinguished for peculiar beauty. The chalk hills break into cliffs that overhang the Thames, or form valleys clothed with beech; the wilder portion of the country is rendered

beautiful by exuberant vegetation; and the cultivated part is peculiarly fertile. With all this wealth of nature which, either in the form of gentlemen's parks or soil dedicated to agriculture, flourishes around, Marlow was inhabited (I hope it is altered now) by a very poor population. The women are lace-makers, and lose their health by sedentary labour, for which they were very ill paid. The poor-laws ground to the dust not only the paupers, but those who had risen just above that state, and were obliged to pay poor-rates. The changes produced by peace following a long war, and a bad harvest, brought with them the most heart-rending evils to the poor. Shelley afforded what alleviation he could. In the winter, while bringing out his poem, he had a severe attack of ophthalmia, caught while visiting the poor cottages. I mention these things,—for this minute and active sympathy with his fellow-creatures gives a thousand-fold interest to his speculations, and stamps with reality his pleadings for the human race.

The poem, bold in its opinions and uncompromising in their expression, met with many censors, not only among those who allow of no virtue but such as supports the cause they espouse, but even among those whose opinions were similar to his own. I extract a portion of a letter written in answer to one of these friends;¹ it best details the impulses of Shelley's mind and his motives: it was written with entire unreserve; and is therefore a precious monument of his own opinion of his powers, of the purity of his designs, and the ardour with which he clung, in adversity and through the valley of the shadow of death, to views from which he believed the permanent happiness of mankind must eventually spring.

“*Marlow, Dec. 11, 1817.*”

“I have read and considered all that you say about my general powers, and the particular instance of the Poem in which I have attempted to develop them. Nothing can be more satisfactory to me than the interest which your admonitions express. But I think you are mistaken in

¹ William Godwin: see *Shelley Memorials*, p. 84.

some points with regard to the peculiar nature of my powers, whatever be their amount. I listened with deference and self-suspicion to your censures of 'the Revolt of Islam;' but the productions of mine which you commend hold a very low place in my own esteem; and this reassured me, in some degree at least. The poem was produced by a series of thoughts which filled my mind with unbounded and sustained enthusiasm. I felt the precariousness of my life, and I engaged in this task, resolved to leave some record of myself. Much of what the volume contains was written with the same feeling, as real, though not so prophetic, as the communications of a dying man. I never presumed indeed to consider it anything approaching to faultless; but when I consider contemporary productions of the same apparent pretensions, I own I was filled with confidence. I felt that it was in many respects a genuine picture of my own mind. I felt that the sentiments were true, not assumed. And in this have I long believed that my power consists; in sympathy and that part of the imagination which relates to sentiment and contemplation. I am formed, if for anything not in common with the herd of mankind, to apprehend minute and remote distinctions of feeling, whether relative to external nature or the living beings which surround us, and to communicate the conceptions which result from considering either the moral or the material universe as a whole. Of course, I believe these faculties, which perhaps comprehend all that is sublime in man, to exist very imperfectly in my own mind. But when you advert to my chancery paper, a cold, forced, unimpassioned, insignificant piece of cramped and cautious argument; and to the little scrap about Mandeville, which expressed my feelings indeed, but cost scarcely two minutes' thought to express, as specimens of my powers, more favourable than that which grew as it were from 'the agony and bloody sweat' of intellectual travail; surely I must feel that in some manner, either I am mistaken in believing that I have any talent at all, or you in the selection of the specimens of it.

"Yet after all, I cannot but be conscious in much of what I write, of an absence of that tranquillity which is the attribute and accompaniment of power. This feeling alone

would make your most kind and wise admonitions, on the subject of the economy of intellectual force, valuable to me. And if I live, or if I see any trust in coming years, doubt not but that I shall do something, whatever it may be, which a serious and earnest estimate of my powers will suggest to me, and which will be in every respect accommodated to their utmost limits."

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND.

ON the 12th of March, 1818, Shelley quitted England, never to return. His principal motive was the hope that his health would be improved by a milder climate; he suffered very much during the winter previous to his emigration, and this decided his vacillating purpose. In December, 1817, he had written from Marlow to a friend, saying:—

"My health has been materially worse. My feelings at intervals are of a deadly and torpid kind, or awakened to such a state of unnatural and keen excitement, that only to instance the organ of sight, I find the very blades of grass and the boughs of distant trees present themselves to me with microscopic distinctness. Towards evening I sink into a state of lethargy and inanimation, and often remain for hours on the sofa between sleep and waking, a prey to the most painful irritability of thought. Such, with little intermission, is my condition. The hours devoted to study are selected with vigilant caution from among these periods of endurance. It is not for this that I think of travelling to Italy, even if I knew that Italy would relieve me. But I have experienced a decisive pulmonary attack, and although at present it has passed away without any considerable vestige of its existence, yet this symptom sufficiently shows the true nature of my disease to be consumptive. It is to my advantage that this malady is in its nature slow, and, if one is sufficiently alive to its advances, is susceptible of cure from a warm climate. In the event of its assuming any decided shape, *it would be my duty* to go to Italy without delay. It is not mere health, but life, that I should seek,

and that not for my own sake; I feel I am capable of trampling on all such weakness—but for the sake of those to whom my life may be a source of happiness, utility, security, and honour—and to some of whom my death might be all that is the reverse.”

In almost every respect his journey to Italy was advantageous. He left behind friends to whom he was attached, but cares of a thousand kinds, many springing from his lavish generosity, crowded round him in his native country: and, except the society of one or two friends, he had no compensation. The climate caused him to consume half his existence in helpless suffering. His dearest pleasure, the free enjoyment of the scenes of nature, was marred by the same circumstance.

He went direct to Italy, avoiding even Paris, and did not make any pause till he arrived at Milan. The first aspect of Italy enchanted Shelley; it seemed a garden of delight placed beneath a clearer and brighter heaven than any he had lived under before. He wrote long descriptive letters during the first year of his residence in Italy, which, as compositions, are the most beautiful in the world, and show how truly he appreciated and studied the wonders of nature and art in that divine land.

The poetical spirit within him speedily revived with all the power and with more than all the beauty of his first attempts. He meditated three subjects as the groundwork for lyrical Dramas. One was the story of Tasso; of this a slight fragment of a song of Tasso remains. The other was one founded on the book of Job, which he never abandoned in idea, but of which no trace remains among his papers. The third was the “Prometheus Unbound.” The Greek tragedians were now his most familiar companions in his wanderings, and the sublime majesty of Æschylus filled him with wonder and delight. The father of Greek tragedy does not possess the pathos of Sophocles, nor the variety and tenderness of Euripides; the interest on which he founds his dramas is often elevated above human vicissitudes into the mighty passions and throes of gods and demigods—such fascinated the abstract imagination of Shelley.

We spent a month at Milan, visiting the Lake of Como

during that interval. Thence we passed in succession to Pisa, Leghorn, the Baths of Lucca, Venice, Este, Rome, Naples, and back again to Rome, whither we returned early in March 1819. During all this time Shelley meditated the subject of his drama, and wrote portions of it. Other poems were composed during this interval, and while at the Bagni di Lucca he translated Plato's Symposium. But though he diversified his studies, his thoughts centred in the "Prometheus." At last, when at Rome, during a bright and beautiful spring, he gave up his whole time to the composition. The spot selected for his study was, as he mentions in his preface, the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla. These are little known to the ordinary visitor at Rome. He describes them in a letter, with that poetry, and delicacy, and truth of description, which render his narrated impressions of scenery of unequalled beauty and interest.

At first he completed the drama in three acts. It was not till several months after, when at Florence, that he conceived that a fourth act, a sort of hymn of rejoicing in the fulfilment of the prophecies with regard to Prometheus, ought to be added to complete the composition.

The prominent feature of Shelley's theory of the destiny of the human species was, that evil is not inherent in the system of the creation, but an accident that might be expelled. This also forms a portion of Christianity; God made earth and man perfect, till he, by his fall,

"Brought death into the world and all our woe."

Shelley believed that mankind had only to will that there should be no evil, and there would be none. It is not my part in these notes to notice the arguments that have been urged against this opinion, but to mention the fact that he entertained it, and was indeed attached to it with fervent enthusiasm. That man could be so perfectionized as to be able to expel evil from his own nature, and from the greater part of the creation, was the cardinal point of his system. And the subject he loved best to dwell on, was the image of One warring with the Evil Principle,

oppressed not only by it, but by all, even the good, who were deluded into considering evil a necessary portion of humanity. A victim full of fortitude and hope, and the spirit of triumph emanating from a reliance in the ultimate omnipotence of good. Such he had depicted in his last poem, when he made Laon the enemy and the victim of tyrants. He now took a more idealized image of the same subject. He followed certain classical authorities in figuring Saturn as the good principle, Jupiter the usurping evil one, and Prometheus as the regenerator, who, unable to bring mankind back to primitive innocence, used knowledge as a weapon to defeat evil, by leading mankind beyond the state wherein they are sinless through ignorance, to that in which they are virtuous through wisdom. Jupiter punished the temerity of the Titan by chaining him to a rock of Caucasus, and causing a vulture to devour his still renewed heart. There was a prophecy afloat in heaven portending the fall of Jove, the secret of averting which was known only to Prometheus; and the god offered freedom from torture on condition of its being communicated to him. According to the mythological story, this referred to the offspring of Thetis, who was destined to be greater than his father. Prometheus at last bought pardon for his crime of enriching mankind with his gifts, by revealing the prophecy. Hercules killed the vulture and set him free, and Thetis was married to Peleus, the father of Achilles.

Shelley adapted the catastrophe of this story to his peculiar views. The son, greater than his father, born of the nuptials of Jupiter and Thetis, was to dethrone Evil, and bring back a happier reign than that of Saturn. Prometheus defies the power of his enemy, and endures centuries of torture, till the hour arrives when Jove, blind to the real event, but darkly guessing that some great good to himself will flow, espouses Thetis. At the moment, the Primal Power of the world drives him from his usurped throne, and Strength, in the person of Hercules, liberates Humanity, typified in Prometheus, from the tortures generated by evil done or suffered. Asia, one of the Oceanides, is the wife of Prometheus—she was, according to other mythological interpretations, the same as Venus and Nature. When the

Benefactor of Mankind is liberated, Nature resumes the beauty of her prime, and is united to her husband, the emblem of the human race, in perfect and happy union. In the Fourth Act, the Poet gives further scope to his imagination, and idealizes the forms of creation, such as we know them, instead of such as they appeared to the Greeks. Maternal Earth, the mighty Parent, is superseded by the Spirit of the Earth—the guide of our Planet through the realms of sky—while his fair and weaker companion and attendant, the Spirit of the Moon, receives bliss from the annihilation of Evil in the superior sphere.

Shelley develops, more particularly in the lyrics of this drama, his abstruse and imaginative theories with regard to the Creation. It requires a mind as subtle and penetrating as his own to understand the mystic meanings scattered throughout the poem. They elude the ordinary reader by their abstraction and delicacy of distinction, but they are far from vague. It was his design to write prose metaphysical essays on the nature of Man, which would have served to explain much of what is obscure in his poetry; a few scattered fragments of observations and remarks alone remain. He considered these philosophical views of mind and nature to be instinct with the intensest spirit of poetry.

More popular poets clothe the ideal with familiar and sensible imagery. Shelley loved to idealize the real—to gift the mechanism of the material universe with a soul and a voice, and to bestow such also on the most delicate and abstract emotions and thoughts of the mind. Sophocles was his great master in this species of imagery.

I find in one of his manuscript books some remarks on a line in the *Œdipus Tyrannus*, which shows at once the critical subtlety of Shelley's mind, and explains his apprehension of those "minute and remote distinctions of feeling, whether relative to external nature or the living beings which surround us," which he pronounces, in the letter quoted in the note to the *Revolt of Islam*, to comprehend all that is sublime in man.

"In the Greek Shakspeare, Sophocles, we find the image,

Πολλὰς δ' ὁδοὺς ἐλθόντα φροντίδος πλάνους.

A line of almost unfathomable depth of poetry, yet how simple are the images in which it is arrayed,

Coming to many ways in the wanderings of careful thought.

If the words *ὁδοὺς* and *πλάνους* had not been used, the line might have been explained in a metaphorical, instead of an absolute sense, as we say 'ways and means,' and wanderings, for error and confusion; but they meant literally paths or roads, such as we tread with our feet; and wanderings, such as a man makes when he loses himself in a desert, or roams from city to city, as *Cedipus*, the speaker of this verse, was destined to wander, blind and asking charity. What a picture does this line suggest of the mind as a wilderness of intricate paths, wide as the universe, which is here made its symbol, a world within a world, which he, who seeks some knowledge with respect to what he ought to do, searches throughout, as he would search the external universe for some valued thing which was hidden from him upon its surface."

In reading Shelley's poetry, we often find similar verses, resembling, but not imitating, the Greek in this species of imagery; for though he adopted the style, he gifted it with that originality of form and colouring which sprung from his own genius.

In the *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley fulfils the promise quoted from a letter in the Note on the Revolt of Islam.¹

The tone of the composition is calmer and more majestic, the poetry more perfect as a whole, and the imagination displayed at once more pleasingly beautiful and more varied and daring. The description of the Hours, as they are seen in the cave of Demogorgon, is an instance of this—it fills the

¹ While correcting the proof-sheets of that Poem, it struck me that the Poet had indulged in an exaggerated view of the evils of restored despotism, which, however injurious and degrading, were less openly sanguinary than the triumph of anarchy, such as it appeared in France at the close of the last century. But at this time a book, "Scenes of Spanish Life," translated

by Lieutenant Crawford from the German of Dr. Huber, of Rostock, fell into my hands. The account of the triumph of the priests and the serviles, after the French invasion of Spain in 1823, bears a strong and frightful resemblance to some of the descriptions of the massacre of the patriots in the Revolt of Islam.—*M. S.*

mind as the most charming picture—we long to see an artist at work to bring to our view the

cars drawn by rainbow-winged steeds,
Which trample the dim winds: in each there stands
A wild-eyed charioteer, urging their flight.
Some look behind, as fiends pursued them there,
And yet I see no shapes but the keen stars:
Others, with burning eyes, lean forth, and drink
With eager lips the wind of their own speed.
As if the thing they loved fled on before,
And now, even now, they clasped it. Their bright looks
Stream like a comet's flashing hair: they all
Sweep onward.

Through the whole Poem there reigns a sort of calm and holy spirit of love; it soothes the tortured, and is hope to the expectant, till the prophecy is fulfilled, and Love, untainted by any evil, becomes the law of the world.

England had been rendered a painful residence to Shelley, as much by the sort of persecution with which in those days all men of liberal opinions were visited, and by the injustice he had lately endured in the Court of Chancery, as by the symptoms of disease which made him regard a visit to Italy as necessary to prolong his life. An exile, and strongly impressed with the feeling that the majority of his countrymen regarded him with sentiments of aversion, such as his own heart could experience towards none, he sheltered himself from such disgusting and painful thoughts in the calm retreats of poetry, and built up a world of his own, with the more pleasure, since he hoped to induce some one or two to believe that the earth might become such, did mankind themselves consent. The charm of the Roman climate helped to clothe his thoughts in greater beauty than they had ever worn before. And as he wandered among the ruins, made one with nature in their decay, or gazed on the Praxitelean shapes that throng the Vatican, the Capitol, and the palaces of Rome, his soul imbibed forms of loveliness which became a portion of itself. There are many passages in the "Prometheus" which show the intense delight he received from such studies, and give back the impression with a beauty of poetical description peculiarly his own.

He felt this, as a poet must feel when he satisfies himself by the result of his labours, and he wrote from Rome, "My Prometheus Unbound is just finished, and in a month or two I shall send it. It is a drama, with characters and mechanism of a kind yet unattempted, and I think the execution is better than any of my former attempts."

I may mention, for the information of the more critical reader, that the verbal alterations in this edition of Prometheus are made from a list of errata, written by Shelley himself.

THE CENCI.

THE sort of mistake that Shelley made, as to the extent of his own genius and powers, which led him deviously at first, but lastly into the direct track that enabled him fully to develop them, is a curious instance of his modesty of feeling, and of the methods which the human mind uses at once to deceive itself, and yet, in its very delusion, to make its way out of error into the path which nature has marked out as its right one. He often incited me to attempt the writing a tragedy—he conceived that I possessed some dramatic talent, and he was always most earnest and energetic in his exhortations that I should cultivate any talent I possessed, to the utmost. I entertained a truer estimate of my powers; and, above all, though at that time not exactly aware of the fact, I was far too young to have any chance of succeeding, even moderately, in a species of composition, that requires a greater scope of experience in, and sympathy with, human passion than could then have fallen to my lot, or than any perhaps, except Shelley, ever possessed, even at the age of twenty-six, at which he wrote the Cenci.

On the other hand, Shelley most erroneously conceived himself to be destitute of this talent. He believed that one of the first requisites was the capacity of forming and following up a story or plot. He fancied himself to be defective in this portion of imagination—it was that which gave him least pleasure in the writings of others—though he laid great store by it, as the proper framework to support the

sublimest efforts of poetry. He asserted that he was too metaphysical and abstract—too fond of the theoretical and the ideal, to succeed as a tragedian. It perhaps is not strange that I shared this opinion with himself, for he had hitherto shown no inclination for, nor given any specimen of his powers in framing and supporting the interest of a story, either in prose or verse. Once or twice, when he attempted such, he had speedily thrown it aside, as being even disagreeable to him as an occupation.

The subject he had suggested for a tragedy was Charles I., and he had written to me, "Remember, remember Charles I. I have been already imagining how you would conduct some scenes. The second volume of *St. Leon* begins with this proud and true sentiment, 'There is nothing which the human mind can conceive which it may not execute.' Shakspeare was only a human being." These words were written in 1818, while we were in Lombardy, when he little thought how soon a work of his own would prove a proud comment on the passage he quoted. When in Rome, in 1819, a friend put into our hands the old manuscript account of the story of the Cenci. We visited the Colonna and Doria palaces, where the portraits of Beatrice were to be found; and her beauty cast the reflection of its own grace over her appalling story. Shelley's imagination became strongly excited, and he urged the subject to me as one fitted for a tragedy. More than ever I felt my incompetence; but I entreated him to write it instead; and he began and proceeded swiftly, urged on by intense sympathy with the sufferings of the human beings whose passions, so long cold in the tomb, he revived, and gifted with poetic language. This tragedy is the only one of his works that he communicated to me during its progress. We talked over the arrangement of the scenes together. I speedily saw the great mistake we had made, and triumphed in the discovery of the new talent brought to light from that mine of wealth, never, alas! through his untimely death, worked to its depths—his richly-gifted mind.

We suffered a severe affliction in Rome by the loss of our eldest child, who was of such beauty and promise as to cause him deservedly to be the idol of our hearts. We left

the capital of the world, anxious for a time to escape a spot associated too intimately with his presence and loss.¹ Some friends of ours² were residing in the neighbourhood of Leghorn, and we took a small house, Villa Valsovano, about half-way between the town and Monte Nero, where we remained during the summer. Our villa was situated in the midst of a podere; the peasants sang as they worked beneath our windows, during the heats of a very hot season, and in the evening the water-wheel creaked as the process of irrigation went on, and the fire-flies flashed from among the myrtle hedges:—nature was bright, sunshiny, and cheerful, or diversified by storms of a majestic terror, such as we had never before witnessed.

At the top of the house, there was a sort of terrace. There is often such in Italy, generally roofed. This one was very small, yet not only roofed but glazed; this Shelley made his study; it looked out on a wide prospect of fertile country, and commanded a view of the near sea. The storms that sometimes varied our day showed themselves most picturesquely as they were driven across the ocean; sometimes the dark lurid clouds dipped towards the waves, and became water-spouts, that churned up the waters beneath, as they were chased onward, and scattered by the tempest. At other times the dazzling sunlight and heat made it almost intolerable to every other; but Shelley basked in both, and his health and spirits revived under their influence. In this airy cell he wrote the principal part of *The Cenci*. He was making a study of Calderon at the time, reading his best tragedies with an accomplished lady³ living near us, to whom his letter from Leghorn was addressed during the following year. He admired Calderon, both for his poetry and his dramatic genius; but it shows

¹ Such feelings haunted him when, in the *Cenci*, he makes Beatrice speak to Cardinal Camillo of

that fair blue-eyed child,

Who was the load-star of your life.

And say—

All see, since his most piteous death,
That day and night, and heaven and earth
and time,

And all the things hoped for, or done therein,
Are changed to you, through your exceeding
grief.

—M. S.

² Mr. and Mrs. Gisborne and Henry Reveley.

³ Mrs. Gisborne.

his judgment and originality, that, though greatly struck by his first acquaintance with the Spanish poet, none of his peculiarities crept into the composition of *The Cenci*; and there is no trace of his new studies, except in that passage to which he himself alludes, as suggested by one in *El Purgatorio de San Patricio*.

Shelley wished *The Cenci* to be acted. He was not a play-goer, being of such fastidious taste that he was easily disgusted by the bad filling up of the inferior parts. While preparing for our departure from England, however, he saw Miss O'Neil several times; she was then in the zenith of her glory, and Shelley was deeply moved by her impersonation of several parts, and by the graceful sweetness, the intense pathos, and sublime vehemence of passion she displayed. She was often in his thoughts as he wrote, and when he had finished, he became anxious that his tragedy should be acted, and receive the advantage of having this accomplished actress to fill the part of the heroine. With this view he wrote the following letter to a friend¹ in London:—

“The object of the present letter is to ask a favour of you. I have written a tragedy on a story well known in Italy, and, in my conception, eminently dramatic. I have taken some pains to make my play fit for representation, and those who have already seen it judge favourably. It is written without any of the peculiar feelings and opinions which characterize my other compositions; I having attended simply to the impartial development of such characters as it is probable the persons represented really were, together with the greatest degree of popular effect to be produced by such a development. I send you a translation of the Italian MS. on which my play is founded; the chief circumstance of which I have touched very delicately; for my principal doubt as to whether it would succeed, as an acting play, hangs entirely on the question as to whether any such a thing as incest in this shape, however treated, would be admitted on the stage. I think, however, it will form no objection, considering, first, that the facts are matter of

¹ Thomas Love Peacock.

history, and, secondly, the peculiar delicacy with which I have treated it.¹

"I am exceedingly interested in the question of whether this attempt of mine will succeed or not. I am strongly inclined to the affirmative at present; founding my hopes on this, that as a composition it is certainly not inferior to any of the modern plays that have been acted, with the exception of 'Remorse;' that the interest of the plot is incredibly greater and more real, and that there is nothing beyond what the multitude are contented to believe that they can understand, either in imagery, opinion, or sentiment. I wish to preserve a complete incognito, and can trust to you that, whatever else you do, you will at least favour me on this point. Indeed this is essential, deeply essential to its success. After it had been acted and successfully, (could I hope for such a thing) I would own it if I pleased, and use the celebrity it might acquire to my own purposes.

"What I want you to do, is to procure for me its presentation at Covent Garden. The principal character, Beatrice, is precisely fitted for Miss O'Neil, and it might even seem to have been written for her, (God forbid that I should see her play it—it would tear my nerves to pieces) and in all respects it is fitted only for Covent Garden. The chief male character I confess I should be very unwilling that any one but Kean should play—that is impossible, and I must be contented with an inferior actor."

The play was accordingly sent to Mr. Harris. He pronounced the subject to be so objectionable, that he could not even submit the part to Miss O'Neil for perusal, but expressed his desire that the author would write a tragedy on some other subject, which he would gladly accept. Shelley printed a small edition at Leghorn, to insure its correctness; as he was much annoyed by the many mistakes that crept into his text, when distance prevented him from correcting the press.

¹ In speaking of his mode of treating this main incident, Shelley said that it might be remarked that, in the course of the play, he had never mentioned expressly Cenci's worst crime. Every one knew what it must

be, but it was never imaged in words—the nearest allusion to it being that portion of Cenci's curse, beginning,

"That if she have a child," &c.

—M. S.

Universal approbation soon stamped *The Cenci* as the best tragedy of modern times. Writing concerning it, Shelley said: "I have been cautious to avoid the introducing faults of youthful composition; diffuseness, a profusion of inapplicable imagery, vagueness, generality, and, as Hamlet says, *words, words.*" There is nothing that is not purely dramatic throughout; and the character of Beatrice, proceeding from vehement struggle to horror, to deadly resolution, and lastly, to the elevated dignity of calm suffering joined to passionate tenderness and pathos, is touched with hues so vivid and so beautiful, that the poet seems to have read intimately the secrets of the noble heart imaged in the lovely countenance of the unfortunate girl. The Fifth Act is a masterpiece. It is the finest thing he ever wrote, and may claim proud comparison not only with any contemporary, but preceding poet. The varying feelings of Beatrice are expressed with passionate, heart-reaching eloquence. Every character has a voice that echoes truth in its tones. It is curious, to one acquainted with the written story, to mark the success with which the poet has inwoven the real incidents of the tragedy into his scenes, and yet, through the power of poetry, has obliterated all that would otherwise have shown too harsh or too hideous in the picture. His success was a double triumph; and often after he was earnestly entreated to write again in a style that commanded popular favour, while it was not less instinct with truth and genius. But the bent of his mind went the other way; and even when employed on subjects whose interest depended on character and incident, he would start off in another direction, and leave the delineations of human passion, which he could depict in so able a manner, for fantastic creations of his fancy, or the expression of those opinions and sentiments with regard to human nature and its destiny; a desire to diffuse which, was the master passion of his soul.¹

¹ Mrs. Shelley, finding among her papers "the account of the case of the Cenci family, translated from the old Roman MS., written at the period

when the disastrous events it commemorates occurred," appended it, "as the perusal must interest every reader."

HELLAS.

THE south of Europe was in a state of great political excitement at the beginning of the year 1821. The Spanish Revolution had been a signal to Italy—secret societies were formed—and when Naples rose to declare the Constitution, the call was responded to from Brundisium to the foot of the Alps. To crush these attempts to obtain liberty, early in 1821, the Austrians poured their armies into the Peninsula: at first their coming rather seemed to add energy and resolution to a people long enslaved. The Piedmontese asserted their freedom; Genoa threw off the yoke of the King of Sardinia; and, as if in playful imitation, the people of the little state of Massa and Carrara gave the *congé* to their sovereign and set up a republic.

Tuscany alone was perfectly tranquil. It was said, that the Austrian minister presented a list of sixty Carbonari to the grand-duke, urging their imprisonment; and the grand-duke replied, "I do not know whether these sixty men are Carbonari, but I know if I imprison them, I shall directly have sixty thousand start up." But though the Tuscans had no desire to disturb the paternal government, beneath whose shelter they slumbered, they regarded the progress of the various Italian revolutions with intense interest, and hatred for the Austrian was warm in every bosom. But they had slender hopes; they knew that the Neapolitans would offer no fit resistance to the regular German troops, and that the overthrow of the Constitution in Naples would act as a decisive blow against all struggles for liberty in Italy.

We have seen the rise and progress of reform. But the Holy Alliance was alive and active in those days, and few could dream of the peaceful triumph of liberty. It seemed then that the armed assertion of freedom in the south of Europe was the only hope of the liberals, as, if it prevailed, the nations of the north would imitate the example. Happily the reverse has proved the fact. The countries accustomed to the exercise of the privileges of freemen, to a limited extent, have extended, and are extending these

limits. Freedom and knowledge have now a chance of proceeding hand in hand; and if it continue thus, we may hope for the durability of both. Then, as I have said, in 1821, Shelley, as well as every other lover of liberty, looked upon the struggles in Spain and Italy as decisive of the destinies of the world, probably for centuries to come. The interest he took in the progress of affairs was intense. When Genoa declared itself free, his hopes were at their highest. Day after day, he read the bulletins of the Austrian army, and sought eagerly to gather tokens of its defeat. He heard of the revolt of Genoa with emotions of transport. His whole heart and soul were in the triumph of their cause. We were living at Pisa at that time; and several well-informed Italians, at the head of whom we may place the celebrated Vaccá, were accustomed to seek for sympathy in their hopes from Shelley: they did not find such for the despair they too generally experienced, founded on contempt for their southern countrymen.

While the fate of the progress of the Austrian armies then invading Naples was yet in suspense, the news of another revolution filled him with exultation. We had formed the acquaintance at Pisa of several Constantinopolitan Greeks, of the family of Prince Caradja, formerly Hospodar of Wallachia, who, hearing that the bowstring, the accustomed finale of his viceroyalty, was on the road to him, escaped with his treasures, and took up his abode in Tuscany. Among these was the gentleman to whom the drama of *Hellas* is dedicated. Prince Mavrocordato was warmed by those aspirations for the independence of his country, which filled the hearts of many of his countrymen. He often intimated the possibility of an insurrection in Greece; but we had no idea of its being so near at hand, when, on the 1st of April, 1821, he called on Shelley; bringing the proclamation of his cousin, Prince Ipsilanti, and, radiant with exultation and delight, declared that henceforth Greece would be free.

Shelley had hymned the dawn of liberty in Spain and Naples, in two odes, dictated by the warmest enthusiasm;—he felt himself naturally impelled to decorate with poetry the uprise of the descendants of that people, whose works he

regarded with deep admiration; and to adopt the vaticinatory character in prophesying their success. "Hellas" was written in a moment of enthusiasm. It is curious to remark how well he overcomes the difficulty of forming a drama out of such scant materials. His prophecies, indeed, came true in their general, not their particular purport. He did not foresee the death of Lord Londonderry, which was to be the epoch of a change in English politics, particularly as regarded foreign affairs; nor that the navy of his country would fight for instead of against the Greeks; and by the battle of Navarino secure their enfranchisement from the Turks. Almost against reason, as it appeared to him, he resolved to believe that Greece would prove triumphant; and in this spirit, auguring ultimate good, yet grieving over the vicissitudes to be endured in the interval, he composed his drama.

The chronological order to be observed in the arrangement of the remaining poems, is interrupted here, that his dramas may follow each other consecutively. "Hellas" was among the last of his compositions, and is among the most beautiful. The choruses are singularly imaginative, and melodious in their versification. There are some stanzas that beautifully exemplify Shelley's peculiar style; as, for instance, the assertion of the intellectual empire which must be for ever the inheritance of the country of Homer, Sophocles, and Plato:

But Greece and her foundations are
Built below the tide of war;
Based on the crystalline sea
Of thought and its eternity.

And again, that philosophical truth, felicitously imaged forth—

Revenge and wrong bring forth their kind,
The foul cubs like their parents are;
Their den is in the guilty mind,
And conscience feeds them with despair.

The conclusion of the last chorus is among the most beautiful of his lyrics; the imagery is distinct and majestic; the prophecy, such as poets love to dwell upon, the regenera-

tion of mankind—and that regeneration reflecting back splendour on the foregone time, from which it inherits so much of intellectual wealth, and memory of past virtuous deeds, as must render the possession of happiness and peace of tenfold value.

CEDIPUS TYRANNUS.

IN the brief journal I kept in those days, I find recorded, in August 1820, Shelley "begins Swellfoot the Tyrant, suggested by the pigs at the fair of San Giuliano." This was the period of Queen Caroline's landing in England, and the struggles made by Geo. IV. to get rid of her claims; which failing, Lord Castlereagh placed the "*Green Bag*" on the table of the House of Commons, demanding, in the King's name, that an inquiry should be instituted into his wife's conduct. These circumstances were the theme of all conversation among the English. We were then at the Baths of San Giuliano; a friend came to visit us on the day when a fair was held in the square, beneath our windows: Shelley read to us his Ode to Liberty; and was riotously accompanied by the grunting of a quantity of pigs brought for sale to the fair. He compared it to the "chorus of frogs" in the satiric drama of Aristophanes; and it being an hour of merriment, and one ludicrous association suggesting another, he imagined a political satirical drama on the circumstances of the day, to which the pigs would serve as chorus—and Swellfoot was begun. When finished, it was transmitted to England, printed and published anonymously; but stifled at the very dawn of its existence by the "Society for the Suppression of Vice," who threatened to prosecute it, if not immediately withdrawn. The friend¹ who had taken the trouble of bringing it out, of course did not think it worth the annoyance and expense of a contest, and it was laid aside.

Hesitation of whether it would do honour to Shelley prevented my publishing it at first; but I cannot bring myself to keep back anything he ever wrote, for each word is

¹ Horace Smith

fraught with the peculiar views and sentiments which he believed to be beneficial to the human race; and the bright light of poetry irradiates every thought. The world has a right to the entire compositions of such a man; for it does not live and thrive by the out-worn lesson of the dullard or the hypocrite, but by the original free thoughts of men of Genius, who aspire to pluck bright truth

“————— from the pale-faced moon;
Or dive into the bottom of the deep,
Where fathom-line could never touch the ground,
And pluck up drowned—”

truth. Even those who may dissent from his opinions will consider that he was a man of genius, and that the world will take more interest in his slightest word, than from the waters of Lethe, which are so eagerly prescribed as medicinal for all its wrongs and woes. This drama, however, must not be judged for more than was meant. It is a mere plaything of the imagination, which even may not excite smiles among many, who will not see wit in those combinations of thought which were full of the ridiculous to the author. But, like everything he wrote, it breathes that deep sympathy for the sorrows of humanity, and indignation against its oppressors which make it worthy of his name.

EARLY POEMS.

THE remainder of Shelley's Poems will be arranged in the order in which they were written. Of course, mistakes will occur in placing some of the shorter ones; for, as I have said, many of these were thrown aside, and I never saw them till I had the misery of looking over his writings, after the hand that traced them was dust; and some were in the hands of others, and I never saw them till now. The subjects of the poems are often to me an unerring guide; but on other occasions, I can only guess, by finding them in the pages of the same manuscript book that contains poems with the date of whose composition I am fully conversant. In

the present arrangement all his poetical translations will be placed together at the end of the volume.

The loss of his early papers prevents my being able to give any of the poetry of his boyhood. Of the few I give as early poems, the greater part were published with "Alastor;" some of them were written previously, some at the same period. The poem beginning, "Oh, there are spirits in the air," was addressed in idea to Coleridge, whom he never knew; and at whose character he could only guess imperfectly, through his writings, and accounts he heard of him from some who knew him well. He regarded his change of opinions as rather an act of will than conviction, and believed that in his inner heart he would be haunted by what Shelley considered the better and holier aspirations of his youth. The summer evening that suggested to him the poem written in the churchyard of Lechlade, occurred during his voyage up the Thames, in the autumn of 1815. He had been advised by a physician to live as much as possible in the open air; and a fortnight of a bright warm July was spent in tracing the Thames to its source. He never spent a season more tranquilly than the summer of 1815. He had just recovered from a severe pulmonary attack; the weather was warm and pleasant. He lived near Windsor Forest, and his life was spent under its shades, or on the water; meditating subjects for verse. Hitherto, he had chiefly aimed at extending his political doctrines; and attempted so to do by appeals, in prose essays, to the people, exhorting them to claim their rights¹; but he had now begun to feel that the time for action was not ripe in England, and that the pen was the only instrument wherewith to prepare the way for better things.

In the scanty journals kept during those years, I find a record of the books that Shelley read during several years. During the years of 1814 and 1815, the list is extensive. It includes in Greek; Homer, Hesiod, Theocritus—the histories

¹ Perhaps this refers rather to the posthumous prose fragments assignable to the year 1815 than to actual publications in prose. Except *An Address to the Irish People*, the *Pro-*

posals for an Association, the *Declaration of Rights*, and *A Letter to Lord Ellenborough*, all printed in 1812, I do not know what works issued up to 1815 will come within the definition.

of Thucydides and Herodotus, and Diogenes Laertius. In Latin; Petronius, Suetonius, some of the works of Cicero, a large proportion of those of Seneca and Livy. In English; Milton's Poems, Wordsworth's Excursion, Southey's Madoc and Thalaba, Locke on the Human Understanding, Bacon's Novum Organum. In Italian, Ariosto, Tasso, and Alfieri. In French, the *Rêveries d'un Solitaire* of Rousseau. To these may be added several modern books of travels. He read few novels.

POEMS OF 1816.

SHELLEY wrote little during this year. The Poem entitled the "Sunset" was written in the spring of the year, while still residing at Bishopgate. He spent the summer on the shores of the Lake of Geneva. "The Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" was conceived during his voyage round the lake with Lord Byron. He occupied himself during this voyage, by reading the *Nouvelle Héloïse* for the first time. The reading it on the very spot where the scenes are laid, added to the interest; and he was at once surprised and charmed by the passionate eloquence and earnest enthralling interest that pervades this work. There was something in the character of Saint-Preux, in his abnegation of self, and in the worship he paid to Love, that coincided with Shelley's own disposition; and, though differing in many of the views, and shocked by others, yet the effect of the whole was fascinating and delightful.

"Mont Blanc" was inspired by a view of that mountain and its surrounding peaks and valleys, as he lingered on the Bridge of Arve on his way through the Valley of Chamouni. Shelley makes the following mention of this poem in his publication of the *History of Six Weeks' Tour, and Letters from Switzerland*:—

"The poem entitled 'Mont Blanc,' is written by the author of the two letters from Chamouni and Vevai. It was composed under the immediate impression of the deep and powerful feelings excited by the objects which it attempts to describe; and as an undisciplined overflowing of the soul, rests its claim to approbation on an attempt to

imitate the untameable wildness and inaccessible solemnity from which those feelings sprang."

This was an eventful year, and less time was given to study than usual. In the list of his reading I find, in Greek: Theocritus, the Prometheus of Æschylus, several of Plutarch's Lives and the works of Lucian. In Latin: Lucretius, Pliny's Letters, the Annals and Germany of Tacitus. In French: the History of the French Revolution, by Lacretelle. He read for the first time, this year, Montaigne's Essays, and regarded them ever after as one of the most delightful and instructive books in the world. The list is scanty in English works—Locke's Essay, Political Justice, and Coleridge's Lay Sermon, form nearly the whole. It was his frequent habit to read aloud to me in the evening; in this way we read, this year, the New Testament, Paradise Lost, Spenser's Fairy Queen, and Don Quixote.

POEMS OF 1817.

THE very illness that oppressed, and the aspect of death which had approached so near Shelley, appears to have kindled to yet keener life the Spirit of Poetry in his heart. The restless thoughts kept awake by pain clothed themselves in verse. Much was composed during this year. The "Revolt of Islam," written and printed, was a great effort—"Rosalind and Helen" was begun—and the fragments and poems I can trace to the same period, show how full of passion and reflection were his solitary hours.

In addition to such poems as have an intelligible aim and shape, many a stray idea and transitory emotion found imperfect and abrupt expression, and then again lost themselves in silence. As he never wandered without a book, and without implements of writing, I find many such in his manuscript books, that scarcely bear record; while some of them, broken and vague as they are, will appear valuable to those who love Shelley's mind, and desire to trace its workings. Thus in the same book that addresses "Constantia, Singing," I find these lines:—

My spirit like a charmed bark doth swim
Upon the liquid waves of thy sweet singing,
Far away into the regions dim
Of rapture—as a boat with swift sails winging
Its way adown some many-winding river.

And this apostrophe to Music:

No, Music, thou art not the God of Love,
Unless Love feeds upon its own sweet self,
Till it becomes all music murmurs of.

In another fragment he calls it—

The silver key of the fountain of tears,
Where the spirit drinks till the brain is wild;
Softest grave of a thousand fears,
Where their mother, Care, like a drowsy child,
Is laid asleep in flowers.

And then again this melancholy trace of the sad thronging thoughts, which were the well whence he drew the idea of Athanase, and express the restless, passion-fraught emotions of one whose sensibility, kindled to too intense a life, perpetually preyed upon itself:

To thirst and find no fill—to wail and wander
With short unsteady steps—to pause and ponder—
To feel the blood run through the veins and tingle
Where busy thought and blind sensation mingle;
To nurse the image of unfelt caresses
Till dim imagination just possesses.
The half created shadow.

In the next page I find a calmer sentiment, better fitted to sustain one whose whole being was love:

Wealth and dominion fade into the mass
Of the great sea of human right and wrong,
When once from our possession they must pass;
But love, though misdirected, is among
The things which are immortal, and surpass
All that frail stuff which will be—or which was.

In another book, which contains some passionate outbreaks

with regard to the great injustice that he endured this year, the poet writes :

My thoughts arise and fade in solitude,
The verse that would invest them melts away
Like moonlight in the heaven of spreading day :
How beautiful they were, how firm they stood,
Flecking the starry sky like woven pearl !

He had this year also projected a poem on the subject of Otho, inspired by the pages of Tacitus. I find one or two stanzas only, which were to open the subject.¹

He projected also translating the Hymns of Homer; his version of several of the shorter ones remain, as well as that to Mercury, already published in the Posthumous Poems. His readings this year were chiefly Greek. Besides the Hymns of Homer and the Iliad, he read the dramas of Æschylus and Sophocles, the Symposium of Plato, and Arrian's *Historia Indica*. In Latin, Apuleius alone is named. In English, the Bible was his constant study; he read a great portion of it aloud in the evening. Among these evening readings, I find also mentioned the *Fairy Queen*, and other modern works, the production of his contemporaries, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Moore, and Byron.

His life was now spent more in thought than action—he had lost the eager spirit which believed it could achieve what it projected for the benefit of mankind. And yet in the converse of daily life Shelley was far from being a melancholy man. He was eloquent when philosophy, or politics, or taste, were the subjects of conversation. He was playful—and indulged in the wild spirit that mocked itself and others—not in bitterness, but in sport. The Author of "*Nightmare Abbey*" seized on some points of his character and some habits of his life when he painted Scythrop. He was not addicted to "port or madeira," but in youth he had read of "*Illuminati and Eleutherarchs*," and believed that he possessed the power of operating an immediate change in the minds of men and the state

¹ Mrs. Shelley here inserts two stanzas of *Otho* (See Vol. II, p. 167) and the lines *To* ——— ("Yet look on me") given at p. 153 of Vol. II.

of society. These wild dreams had faded; sorrow and adversity had struck home; but he struggled with despondency as he did with physical pain. There are few who remember him sailing paper boats, and watching the navigation of his tiny craft with eagerness—or repeating with wild energy the “Ancient Mariner,” and Southey’s “Old Woman of Berkeley,”—but those who do, will recollect that it was in such, and in the creations of his own fancy, when that was most daring and ideal, that he sheltered himself from the storms and disappointments, the pain and sorrow, that beset his life.

POEMS OF 1818

ROSALIND AND HELEN was begun at Marlow, and thrown aside—till I found it; and, at my request, it was completed. Shelley had no care for any of his poems that did not emanate from the depths of his mind, and develop some high or abstruse truth. When he does touch on human life and the human heart, no pictures can be more faithful, more delicate, more subtle, or more pathetic. He never mentioned Love, but he shed a grace, borrowed from his own nature, that scarcely any other poet has bestowed, on that passion. When he spoke of it as the law of life, which inasmuch as we rebel against, we err and injure ourselves and others, he promulgated that which he considered an irrefragable truth. In his eyes it was the essence of our being, and all woe and pain arose from the war made against it by selfishness, or insensibility, or mistake. By reverting in his mind to this first principle, he discovered the source of many emotions, and could disclose the secret of all hearts, and his delineations of passion and emotion touch the finest chords of our nature.

Rosalind and Helen was finished during the summer of 1818, while we were at the Baths of Lucca. Thence Shelley visited Venice, and circumstances rendering it eligible that we should remain a few weeks in the neighbourhood of that city, he accepted the offer of Lord Byron, who lent him the use of a villa he rented near Este; and he sent for his family from Lucca to join him.

I Capuccini was a villa built on the site of a Capuchin convent, demolished when the French suppressed religious houses; it was situated on the very over-hanging brow of a low hill at the foot of a range of higher ones. The house was cheerful and pleasant; a vine-trellised walk, a Pergola, as it is called in Italian, led from the hall door to a summer-house at the end of the garden, which Shelley made his study, and in which he began the *Prometheus*; and here also, as he mentions in a letter, he wrote *Julian and Maddalo*; a slight ravine, with a road in its depth, divided the garden from the hill, on which stood the ruins of the ancient castle of Este, whose dark massive wall gave forth an echo, and from whose ruined crevices, owls and bats flitted forth at night, as the crescent moon sunk behind the black and heavy battlements. We looked from the garden over the wide plain of Lombardy, bounded to the west by the far Apennines, while to the east, the horizon was lost in misty distance. After the picturesque but limited view of mountain, ravine, and chesnut wood at the Baths of Lucca, there was something infinitely gratifying to the eye in the wide range of prospect commanded by our new abode.

Our first misfortune, of the kind from which we soon suffered even more severely, happened here. Our little girl, an infant in whose small features I fancied that I traced great resemblance to her father, showed symptoms of suffering from the heat of the climate. Teething increased her illness and danger. We were at Este, and when we became alarmed, hastened to Venice for the best advice. When we arrived at Fusina, we found that we had forgotten our passport, and the soldiers on duty attempted to prevent our crossing the laguna; but they could not resist Shelley's impetuosity at such a moment. We had scarcely arrived at Venice, before life fled from the little sufferer, and we returned to Este to weep her loss.

After a few weeks spent in this retreat, which were interspersed by visits to Venice, we proceeded southward. We often hear of persons disappointed by a first visit to Italy. This was not Shelley's case—the aspect of its nature, its sunny sky, its majestic storms; of the luxuriant vegeta-

tion of the country, and the noble marble-built cities; enchanted him. The sight of the works of art were full enjoyment and wonder; he had not studied pictures or statues before, he now did so with the eye of taste, that referred not to the rules of schools, but to those of nature and truth. The first entrance to Rome opened to him a scene of remains of antique grandeur that far surpassed his expectations; and the unspeakable beauty of Naples and its environs added to the impression he received of the transcendant and glorious beauty of Italy. As I have said, he wrote long letters during the first year of our residence in this country, and these, when published, will be the best testimonials of his appreciation of the harmonious and beautiful in art and nature, and his delicate taste in discerning and describing them.¹

Our winter was spent at Naples. Here he wrote the fragments of *Marenghi* and the *Woodman* and the *Nightingale*, which he afterwards threw aside. At this time Shelley suffered greatly in health. He put himself under the care of a medical man, who promised great things, and made him endure severe bodily pain, without any good results. Constant and poignant physical suffering exhausted him; and though he preserved the appearance of cheerfulness, and often greatly enjoyed our wanderings in the environs of Naples, and our excursions on its sunny sea, yet many hours were passed when his thoughts, shadowed by illness, became gloomy, and then he escaped to solitude, and in verses, which he hid from fear of wounding me, poured forth morbid but too natural bursts of discontent and sadness. One looks back with unspeakable regret and gnawing remorse to such periods; fancying that had one been more alive to the nature of his feelings, and more attentive to soothe them, such would not have existed—and yet enjoying, as he appeared to do, every sight or influence of earth or sky, it was difficult to imagine that any melancholy he showed was aught but the effect of the constant pain to which he was a martyr.

¹ These letters, together with various essays, translations, and fragments, being the greater portion of the prose

writings left by Shelley, are now in the press.—*M. S.* [They are all included in my edition of the *Prose Works*.]

' We lived in utter solitude—and such is often not the nurse of cheerfulness; for then, at least with those who have been exposed to adversity, the mind broods over its sorrows too intently; while the society of the enlightened, the witty, and the wise, enables us to forget ourselves by making us the sharers of the thoughts of others, which is a portion of the philosophy of happiness. Shelley never liked society in numbers, it harassed and wearied him; but neither did he like loneliness, and usually when alone sheltered himself against memory and reflection, in a book. But with one or two whom he loved, he gave way to wild and joyous spirits, or in more serious conversation expounded his opinions with vivacity and eloquence. If an argument arose, no man ever argued better—he was clear, logical, and earnest, in supporting his own views; attentive, patient, and impartial, while listening to those on the adverse side. Had not a wall of prejudice been raised at this time between him and his countrymen, how many would have sought the acquaintance of one, whom to know was to love and to revere! how many of the more enlightened of his contemporaries have since regretted that they did not seek him! how very few knew his worth while he lived, and of those few, several were withheld by timidity or envy from declaring their sense of it. But no man was ever more enthusiastically loved—more looked up to as one superior to his fellows in intellectual endowments and moral worth, by the few who knew him well, and had sufficient nobleness of soul to appreciate his superiority. His excellence is now acknowledged; but even while admitted, not duly appreciated. For who, except those who were acquainted with him, can imagine his unwearied benevolence, his generosity, his systematic forbearance? And still less is his vast superiority in intellectual attainments sufficiently understood—his sagacity, his clear understanding, his learning, his prodigious memory; all these, as displayed in conversation, were known to few while he lived, and are now silent in the tomb:

Ahi orbo mondo ingrato,
Gran cagion hai di dover pianger meco.
Che quel ben ch' era in te, perduto hai seco.

POEMS OF 1819.

THOUGH Shelley's first eager desire to excite his countrymen to resist openly the oppressions existent during "the good old times" had faded with early youth, still his warmest sympathies were for the people. He was a republican, and loved a democracy. He looked on all human beings as inheriting an equal right to possess the dearest privileges of our nature, the necessities of life, when fairly earned by labour, and intellectual instruction. His hatred of any despotism, that looked upon the people as not to be consulted or protected from want and ignorance, was intense. He was residing near Leghorn, at Villa Valsovano, writing *The Cenci*, when the news of the Manchester Massacre reached us; it roused in him violent emotions of indignation and compassion. The great truth that the many, if accordant and resolute, could control the few, as was shown some years after, made him long to teach his injured countrymen how to resist. Inspired by these feelings, he wrote the *Masque of Anarchy*, which he sent to his friend, Leigh Hunt, to be inserted in the *Examiner*, of which he was then the Editor.

"I did not insert it," Leigh Hunt writes in his valuable and interesting preface to this poem, when he printed it in 1832, "because I thought that the public at large had not become sufficiently discerning to do justice to the sincerity and kindheartedness of his spirit, that walked in this flaming robe of verse." Days of outrage have passed away, and with them the exasperation that would cause such an appeal to the many to be injurious. Without being aware of them, they at one time acted on his suggestions, and gained the day; but they rose when human life was respected by the minister in power; such was not the case during the administration which excited Shelley's abhorrence.

The poem was written for the people, and is therefore in a more popular tone than usual; portions strike as abrupt and unpolished, but many stanzas are all his own. I heard him repeat, and admired those beginning,—

My Father Time is old and grey,

before I knew to what poem they were to belong. But the most touching passage is that which describes the blessed effects of liberty; they might make a patriot of any man, whose heart was not wholly closed against his humbler fellow-creatures.

Shelley loved the people, and respected them as often more virtuous, as always more suffering, and, therefore, more deserving of sympathy, than the great. He believed that a clash between the two classes of society was inevitable, and he eagerly ranged himself on the people's side. He had an idea of publishing a series of poems adapted expressly to commemorate their circumstances and wrongs—he wrote a few, but in those days of prosecution for libel they could not be printed. They are not among the best of his productions, a writer being always shackled when he endeavours to write down to the comprehension of those who could not understand or feel a highly imaginative style; but they show his earnestness, and with what heartfelt compassion he went home to the direct point of injury—that oppression is detestable, as being the parent of starvation, nakedness, and ignorance. Besides these outpourings of compassion and indignation, he had meant to adorn the cause he loved with loftier poetry of glory and triumph—such is the scope of the Ode to the Assertors of Liberty. He sketched also a new version of our national anthem, as addressed to Liberty.¹

Shelley had suffered severely from the death of our son during this summer. His heart, attuned to every kindly affection, was full of burning love for his offspring. No words can express the anguish he felt when his elder children were torn from him. In his first resentment against the Chancellor, on the passing of the decree, he had written a curse, in which there breathes, besides haughty indignation, all the tenderness of a father's love, which could imagine and fondly dwell upon its loss and the consequences.²

At one time, while the question was still pending, the Chancellor had said some words that seemed to intimate

¹ See Vol. II, p. 189.

² Mrs. Shelley here inserts the poem given at p. 162 of Vol. II.

that Shelley should not be permitted the care of any of his children, and for a moment he feared that our infant son would be torn from us. He did not hesitate to resolve, if such were menaced, to abandon country, fortune, everything, and to escape with his child; and I find some unfinished stanzas addressed to this son, whom afterwards we lost at Rome, written under the idea that we might suddenly be forced to cross the sea, so to preserve him. This poem, as well as the one previously quoted, were not written to exhibit the pangs of distress to the public; they were the spontaneous outbursts of a man who brooded over his wrongs and woes, and was impelled to shed the grace of his genius over the uncontrollable emotions of his heart.¹

When afterwards this child died at Rome, he wrote, apropos of the English burying-ground in that city, "This spot is the repository of a sacred loss, of which the yearnings of a parent's heart are now prophetic; he is rendered immortal by love, as his memory is by death. My beloved child lies buried here. I envy death the body far less than the oppressors the minds of those whom they have torn from me. The one can only kill the body, the other crushes the affections."

In this new edition I have added to the poems of this year, "Peter Bell the Third." A critique on Wordsworth's Peter Bell reached us at Leghorn, which amused Shelley exceedingly and suggested this poem.

I need scarcely observe that nothing personal to the Author of Peter Bell is intended in this poem. No man ever admired Wordsworth's poetry more;—he read it perpetually, and taught others to appreciate its beauties. This poem is, like all others written by Shelley, ideal. He conceived the idealism of a poet—a man of lofty and creative genius,—quitting the glorious calling of discovering and announcing the beautiful and good, to support and propagate ignorant prejudices and pernicious errors; imparting to the unenlightened, not that ardour for truth and spirit of tolera-

¹ Mrs. Shelley gives here the stanzas to William Shelley which will be found at p. 164 of Vol. II, and adds, "I

ought to observe that the fourth verse of this effusion is introduced in *Rosalind and Helen.*'

tion which Shelley looked on as the sources of the moral improvement and happiness of mankind; but false and injurious opinions, that evil was good, and that ignorance and force were the best allies of purity and virtue. His idea was that a man gifted even as transcendently as the Author of *Peter Bell*, with the highest qualities of genius, must, if he fostered such errors, be infected with dulness. This poem was written, as a warning—not as a narration of the reality. He was unacquainted personally with Wordsworth or with Coleridge, (to whom he alludes in the fifth part of the poem,) and therefore, I repeat, his poem is purely ideal;—it contains something of criticism on the compositions of these great poets. But nothing injurious to the men themselves.

No poem contains more of Shelley's peculiar views, with regard to the errors into which many of the wisest have fallen, and of the pernicious effects of certain opinions on society. Much of it is beautifully written—and though, like the burlesque drama of *Swellfoot*, it must be looked on as a plaything, it has so much merit and poetry—so much of *himself* in it, that it cannot fail to interest greatly, and by right belongs to the world for whose instruction and benefit it was written.

POEMS OF 1820

WE spent the latter part of the year 1819 in Florence, where Shelley passed several hours daily in the Gallery, and made various notes on its ancient works of art. His thoughts were a good deal taken up also by the project of a steam-boat, undertaken by a friend,¹ an engineer, to ply between Leghorn and Marseilles, for which he supplied a sum of money. This was a sort of plan to delight Shelley, and he was greatly disappointed when it was thrown aside.

There was something in Florence that disagreed excessively

¹ Henry Reveley.

with his health, and he suffered far more pain than usual; so much so that we left it sooner than we intended, and removed to Pisa, where we had some friends, and, above all, where we could consult the celebrated Vaccà, as to the cause of Shelley's sufferings. He, like every other medical man, could only guess at that, and gave little hope of immediate relief; he enjoined him to abstain from all physicians and medicine, and to leave his complaint to nature. As he had vainly consulted medical men of the highest repute in England, he was easily persuaded to adopt this advice. Pain and ill-health followed him to the end, but the residence at Pisa agreed with him better than any other, and there in consequence we remained.

In the spring we spent a week or two near Leghorn, borrowing the house of some friends, who were absent on a journey to England.—It was on a beautiful summer evening, while wandering among the lanes, whose myrtle hedges were the bowers of the fire-flies, that we heard the carolling of the sky-lark, which inspired one of the most beautiful of his poems. He addressed the letter to Mrs. Gisborne from this house, which was hers; he had made his study of the workshop of her son, who was an engineer. Mrs. Gisborne had been a friend of my father in her younger days. She was a lady of great accomplishments, and charming from her frank and affectionate nature. She had the most intense love of knowledge, a delicate and trembling sensibility, and preserved freshness of mind, after a life of considerable adversity. As a favourite friend of my father we had sought her with eagerness, and the most open and cordial friendship was established between us.

We spent the summer at the baths of San Giuliano, four miles from Pisa. These baths were of great use to Shelley in soothing his nervous irritability. We made several excursions in the neighbourhood. The country around is fertile; and diversified and rendered picturesque by ranges of near hills and more distant mountains. The peasantry are a handsome, intelligent race, and there was a gladsome sunny heaven spread over us, that rendered home and every scene we visited cheerful and bright. During some of the hottest days of August, Shelley made a solitary journey on foot to the

summit of Monte San Pelegrino—a mountain of some height, on the top of which there is a chapel, the object, during certain days in the year, of many pilgrimages. The excursion delighted him while it lasted, though he exerted himself too much, and the effect was considerable lassitude and weakness on his return. During the expedition he conceived the idea and wrote, in the three days immediately succeeding to his return, the *Witch of Atlas*. This poem is peculiarly characteristic of his tastes—wildly fanciful, full of brilliant imagery, and discarding human interest and passion, to revel in the fantastic ideas that his imagination suggested.

The surpassing excellence of *The Cenci* had made me greatly desire that Shelley should increase his popularity, by adopting subjects that would more suit the popular taste, than a poem conceived in the abstract and dreamy spirit of the *Witch of Atlas*. It was not only that I wished him to acquire popularity as redounding to his fame; but I believed that he would obtain a greater mastery over his own powers, and greater happiness in his mind, if public applause crowned his endeavours. The few stanzas that precede the poem were addressed to me on my representing these ideas to him. Even now I believe that I was in the right. Shelley did not expect sympathy and approbation from the public; but the want of it took away a portion of the ardour that ought to have sustained him while writing. He was thrown on his own resources, and on the inspiration of his own soul, and wrote because his mind overflowed, without the hope of being appreciated. I had not the most distant wish that he should truckle in opinion, or submit his lofty aspirations for the human race to the low ambition and pride of the many, but I felt sure, that if his poems were more addressed to the common feelings of men, his proper rank among the writers of the day would be acknowledged; and that popularity as a poet would enable his countrymen to do justice to his character and virtues; which, in those days, it was the mode to attack with the most flagitious calumnies and insulting abuse. That he felt these things deeply cannot be doubted, though he armed himself with the consciousness of acting from a lofty and heroic sense of

right. The truth burst from his heart sometimes in solitude, and he would write a few unfinished verses that showed that he felt the sting; among such I find the following:—

Alas! this is not what I thought life was.
I knew that there were crimes and evil men,
Misery and hate; nor did I hope to pass
Untouched by suffering, through the rugged glen.
In mine own heart I saw as in a glass
The hearts of others. . . . And when
I went among my kind, with triple brass
Of calm endurance my weak breast I armed,
To bear scorn, fear, and hate, a woful mass!

I believed that all this morbid feeling would vanish, if the chord of sympathy between him and his countrymen were touched. But my persuasions were vain, the mind could not be bent from its natural inclination. Shelley shrunk instinctively from portraying human passion, with its mixture of good and evil, of disappointment and disquiet. Such opened again the wounds of his own heart, and he loved to shelter himself rather in the airiest flights of fancy, forgetting love and hate, and regret and lost hope, in such imaginations as borrowed their hues from sunrise or sunset, from the yellow moonshine or paly twilight, from the aspect of the far ocean or the shadows of the woods; which celebrated the singing of the winds among the pines, the flow of a murmuring stream, and the thousand harmonious sounds which nature creates in her solitudes. These are the materials which form the *Witch of Atlas*; it is a brilliant congregation of ideas, such as his senses gathered, and his fancy coloured, during his rambles in the sunny land he so much loved.

Our stay at the baths of San Giuliano was shortened by an accident. At the foot of our garden ran the canal that communicated between the Serchio and the Arno. The Serchio overflowed its banks, and breaking its bounds, this canal also overflowed; all this part of the country is below the level of its rivers, and the consequence was, that it was speedily flooded. The rising waters filled the square of the baths, in the lower part of which our house was situated.

The canal overflowed in the garden behind; the rising waters on either side at last burst open the doors, and meeting in the house, rose to the height of six feet. It was a picturesque sight at night, to see the peasants driving the cattle from the plains below, to the hills above the baths. A fire was kept up to guide them across the ford; and the forms of the men and the animals showed in dark relief against the red glare of the flame, which was reflected again in the waters that filled the square.

We then removed to Pisa, and took up our abode there for the winter. The extreme mildness of the climate suited Shelley, and his solitude was enlivened by an intercourse with several intimate friends. Chance cast us, strangely enough, on this quiet, half-unpeopled town; but its very peace suited Shelley,—its river, the near mountains, and not distant sea, added to its attractions, and were the objects of many delightful excursions. We feared the south of Italy and a hotter climate, on account of our child; our former bereavement inspiring us with terror. We seemed to take root here, and moved little afterwards; often, indeed, entertaining projects for visiting other parts of Italy, but still delaying. But for our fears, on account of our child, I believe we should have wandered over the world, both being passionately fond of travelling. But human life, besides its great unalterable necessities, is ruled by a thousand liliputian ties, that shackle at the time, although it is difficult to account afterwards for their influence over our destiny.

POEMS OF 1821.

MY task becomes inexpressibly painful as the year draws near that which sealed our earthly fate; and each poem and each event it records, has a real or mysterious connexion with the fatal catastrophe. I feel that I am incapable of putting on paper the history of those times. The heart of the man, abhorred of the poet,

Who could peep and botanize upon his mother's grave,

does not appear to me less inexplicably framed than that of one who can dissect and probe past woes, and repeat to the public ear the groans drawn from them in the throes of their agony.

The year 1821 was spent in Pisa, or at the baths of San Giuliano. We were not, as our wont had been, alone—friends had gathered round us. Nearly all are dead; and when memory recurs to the past, she wanders among tombs: the genius with all his blighting errors and mighty powers; the companion of Shelley's ocean-wanderings, and the sharer of his fate, than whom no man ever existed more gentle, generous, and fearless; and others, who found in Shelley's society, and in his great knowledge and warm sympathy, delight, instruction and solace, have joined him beyond the grave. A few survive who have felt life a desert since he left it. What misfortune can equal death? Change can convert every other into a blessing, or heal its sting—death alone has no cure; it shakes the foundations of the earth on which we tread, it destroys its beauty, it casts down our shelter, it exposes us bare to desolation; when those we love have passed into eternity, "life is the desert and the solitude," in which we are forced to linger—but never find comfort more.

There is much in the Adonais which seems now more applicable to Shelley himself, than to the young and gifted poet whom he mourned. The poetic view he takes of death, and the lofty scorn he displays towards his calumniators, are as a prophecy on his own destiny, when received among immortal names, and the poisonous breath of critics has vanished into emptiness before the fame he inherits.

Shelley's favourite taste was boating; when living near the Thames, or by the lake of Geneva, much of his life was spent on the water. On the shore of every lake, or stream, or sea, near which he dwelt, he had a boat moored. He had latterly enjoyed this pleasure again. There are no pleasure-boats on the Arno, and the shallowness of its waters except in winter time, when the stream is too turbid and impetuous for boating, rendered it difficult to get any skiff light enough to float. Shelley, however, overcame the difficulty; he, together with a friend, contrived a boat such as the hunts-

men carry about with them in the Maremma, to cross the sluggish but deep streams that intersect the forests, a boat of laths and pitched canvas; it held three persons, and he was often seen on the Arno in it, to the horror of the Italians, who remonstrated on the danger, and could not understand how any one could take pleasure in an exercise that risked life. "Ma va per la vita!" they exclaimed. I little thought how true their words would prove. He once ventured with a friend, on the glassy sea of a calm day, down the Arno and round the coast, to Leghorn, which by keeping close in shore was very practicable. They returned to Pisa by the canal, when, missing the direct cut, they got entangled among weeds, and the boat upset; a wetting was all the harm done, except that the intense cold of his drenched clothes made Shelley faint. Once I went down with him to the mouth of the Arno, where the stream, then high and swift, met the tideless sea and disturbed its sluggish waters; it was a waste and dreary scene; the desert sand stretched into a point surrounded by waves that broke idly though perpetually around; it was a scene very similar to Lido, of which he had said,—

I love all waste
And solitary places; where we taste
The pleasure of believing what we see
Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be;
And such was this wide ocean, and this shore
More barren than its billows.

Our little boat was of greater use, unaccompanied by any danger, when we removed to the baths. Some friends lived at the village of Pugnano,¹ four miles off, and we went to and fro to see them, in our boat, by the canal; which, fed by the Serchio, was, though an artificial, a full and picturesque stream, making its way under verdant banks sheltered by trees that dipped their boughs into the murmuring waters. By day, multitudes of ephemera darted to and fro on the surface; at night, the fire-flies came out among the shrubs on the banks; the cicale at noon day

¹ The Williamsses.

kept up their hum; the aziola cooed in the quiet evening. It was a pleasant summer, bright in all but Shelley's health and inconstant spirits; yet he enjoyed himself greatly, and became more and more attached to the part of the country where chance appeared to cast us. Sometimes he projected taking a farm, situated on the height of one of the near hills, surrounded by chesnut and pine woods, and overlooking a wide extent of country; or of settling still further in the maritime Apennines, at Massa. Several of his slighter and unfinished poems were inspired by these scenes, and by the companions around us. It is the nature of that poetry however which overflows from the soul oftener to express sorrow and regret than joy; for it is when oppressed by the weight of life, and away from those he loves, that the poet has recourse to the solace of expression in verse.

Still Shelley's passion was the ocean; and he wished that our summers, instead of being passed among the hills near Pisa, should be spent on the shores of the sea. It was very difficult to find a spot. We shrank from Naples from a fear that the heats would disagree with Percy; Leghorn had lost its only attraction, since our friends who had resided there were returned to England; and Monte Nero being the resort of many English, we did not wish to find ourselves in the midst of a colony of chance travellers. No one then thought it possible to reside at Via Reggio, which latterly has become a summer resort. The low lands and bad air of Maremma stretch the whole length of the western shores of the Mediterranean, till broken by the rocks and hills of Spezia. It was a vague idea; but Shelley suggested an excursion to Spezia, to see whether it would be feasible to spend a summer there. The beauty of the bay enchanted him—we saw no house to suit us—but the notion took root, and many circumstances, enchaind as by fatality, occurred to urge him to execute it.

He looked forward this autumn with great pleasure to the prospect of a visit from Leigh Hunt. When Shelley visited Lord Byron at Ravenna, the latter had suggested his coming out, together with the plan of a periodical work, in which they should all join. Shelley saw a prospect of good for the fortunes of his friend, and pleasure in his society, and

instantly exerted himself to have the plan executed. He did not intend himself joining in the work; partly from pride, not wishing to have the air of acquiring readers for his poetry by associating it with the compositions of more popular writers; and, also, because he might feel shackled in the free expression of his opinions, if any friends were to be compromised; by those opinions, carried even to their utmost extent, he wished to live and die, as being in his conviction not only true, but such as alone would conduce to the moral improvement and happiness of mankind. The sale of the work might, meanwhile, either really or supposed, be injured by the free expression of his thoughts, and this evil he resolved to avoid.

POEMS OF 1822.

THIS morn thy gallant bark
Sailed on a sunny sea,
'Tis noon, and tempests dark
Have wrecked it on the lee.
Ah woe! ah woe!
By spirits of the deep
Thou'rt cradled on the billow,
To thy eternal sleep.

Thou sleep'st upon the shore
Beside the knelling surge,
And sea-nymphs evermore
Shall sadly chant thy dirge.

They come! they come,
The spirits of the deep,
While near thy sea-weed pillow
My lonely watch I keep.

From far across the sea
I hear a loud lament,
By echo's voice for thee,
From ocean's caverns sent.
O list! O list,
The spirits of the deep;
They raise a wail of sorrow,
While I for ever weep.

WITH this last year of the life of Shelley these Notes end. They are not what I intended them to be. I began with energy and a burning desire to impart to the world, in worthy language, the sense I have of the virtues and genius of the Beloved and the Lost; my strength has failed under the task. Recurrence to the past—full of its own deep and unforgetten joys and sorrows, contrasted with succeeding years of painful and solitary struggle, has shaken my health. Days of great suffering have followed my attempts to write, and these again produced a weakness and languor that spread their sinister influence over these notes. I dislike speaking of myself, but cannot help apologizing to the dead,

and to the public, for not having executed in the manner I desired the history I engaged to give of Shelley's writings.¹

The winter of 1822 was passed in Pisa, if we might call that season winter in which autumn merged into spring, after the interval of but few days of bleaker weather. Spring sprang up early and with extreme beauty. Shelley had conceived the idea of writing a tragedy on the subject of Charles I. It was one that he believed adapted for a drama; full of intense interest, contrasted character, and busy passion. He had recommended it long before, when he encouraged me to attempt a play. Whether the subject proved more difficult than he anticipated, or whether in fact he could not bend his mind away from the broodings and wanderings of thought, divested from human interest, which he best loved, I cannot tell; but he proceeded slowly, and threw it aside for one of the most mystical of his poems, "The Triumph of Life," on which he was employed at the last.

His passion for boating was fostered at this time by having among our friends several sailors; his favourite companion, Edward Ellerker Williams, of the 8th Light Dragoons, had begun his life in the navy, and had afterwards entered the army; he had spent several years in India, and his love for adventure and manly exercises accorded with Shelley's taste. It was their favourite plan to build a boat such as they could manage themselves, and, living on the sea-coast, to enjoy at every hour and season the pleasure they loved best. Captain Roberts, R.N., undertook to build the boat at Genoa, where he was also occupied in building the *Bolivar* for Lord Byron. Ours was to be an open boat, on

¹ I at one time feared that the correction of the press might be less exact through my illness; but, I believe that it is nearly free from error. No omissions have been made in this edition; (in the last of 1839 they were confined to certain passages of "Queen Mab";) some asterisks occur in a few pages, as they did in the volume of *Posthumous Poems*, either because they refer to private concerns, or because the original

manuscript was left imperfect. Did any one see the papers from which I drew that volume, the wonder would be how any eyes or patience were capable of extracting it from so confused a mass, interlined and broken into fragments, so that the sense could only be deciphered and joined by guesses, which might seem rather intuitive than founded on reasoning. Yet I believe no mistake was made.
—M. S.

a model taken from one of the royal dock-yards. I have since heard that there was a defect in this model, and that it was never sea-worthy. In the month of February, Shelley and his friend went to Spezia to seek for houses for us. Only one was to be found at all suitable; however, a trifle such as not finding a house could not stop Shelley; the one found was to serve for all. It was unfurnished; we sent our furniture by sea, and with a good deal of precipitation, arising from his impatience, made our removal. We left Pisa on the 26th of April.

The bay of Spezia is of considerable extent, and divided by a rocky promontory into a larger and smaller one. The town of Lerici is situated on the eastern point, and in the depth of the smaller bay, which bears the name of this town, is the village of Sant' Arenzo. Our house, Casa Magni, was close to this village; the sea came up to the door, a steep hill sheltered it behind. The proprietor of the estate on which it was situated was insane; he had begun to erect a large house at the summit of the hill behind, but his malady prevented its being finished, and it was falling into ruin. He had, and this to the Italians had seemed a glaring symptom of very decided madness, rooted up the olives on the hill side, and planted forest trees; these were mostly young, but the plantation was more in English taste than I ever elsewhere saw in Italy; some fine walnut and ilex trees intermingled their dark massy foliage, and formed groups which still haunt my memory, as then they satiated the eye, with a sense of loveliness. The scene was indeed of unimaginable beauty; the blue extent of waters, the almost land-locked bay, the near castle of Lerici, shutting it in to the east, and distant Porto Venere to the west; the varied forms of the precipitous rocks that bound in the beach, over which there was only a winding rugged foot-path towards Lerici, and none on the other side; the tideless sea leaving no sands nor shingle,—formed a picture such as one sees in Salvator Rosa's landscapes only: sometimes the sunshine vanished when the scirocco raged—the ponente, the wind was called on that shore. The gales and squalls, that hailed our first arrival, surrounded the bay with foam; the howling wind swept round our exposed

house, and the sea roared unremittingly, so that we almost fancied ourselves on board ship. At other times sunshine and calm invested sea and sky, and the rich tints of Italian heaven bathed the scene in bright and ever-varying tints.

The natives were wilder than the place. Our near neighbours, of Sant' Arenzo, were more like savages than any people I ever before lived among. Many a night they passed on the beach, singing or rather howling, the women dancing about among the waves that broke at their feet, the men leaning against the rocks and joining in their loud wild chorus. We could get no provisions nearer than Sarzana, at a distance of three miles and a half off, with the torrent of the Magra between; and even there the supply was very deficient. Had we been wrecked on an island of the South Seas, we could scarcely have felt ourselves further from civilization and comfort; but where the sun shines the latter becomes an unnecessary luxury, and we had enough society among ourselves. Yet I confess housekeeping became rather a toilsome task, especially as I was suffering in my health, and could not exert myself actively.

At first the fatal boat had not arrived, and was expected with great impatience. On Monday, May 12th, it came. Williams records the long-wished-for fact in his journal: "Cloudy and threatening weather. M. Maglian called, and after dinner and while walking with him on the terrace, we discovered a strange sail coming round the point of Porto Venere, which proved at length to be Shelley's boat. She had left Genoa on Thursday last, but had been driven back by the prevailing bad winds. A Mr. Heslop and two English seamen brought her round, and they speak most highly of her performances. She does indeed excite my surprise and admiration. Shelley and I walked to Lerici, and made a stretch off the land to try her; and I find she fetches whatever she looks at. In short, we have now a perfect plaything for the summer."—It was thus that shortsighted mortals welcomed death, he having disguised his grim form in a pleasing mask! The time of the friends was now spent on the sea; the weather became fine, and our whole party often passed the evenings on the water, when the wind promised pleasant sailing. Shelley and Williams

made longer excursions; they sailed several times to Massa; they had engaged one of the seamen who brought her round, a boy, by name Charles Vivian; and they had not the slightest apprehension of danger. When the weather was unfavourable, they employed themselves with alterations in the rigging, and by building a boat of canvas and reeds, as light as possible, to have on board the other, for the convenience of landing in waters too shallow for the larger vessel. When Shelley was on board, he had his papers with him; and much of the "Triumph of Life" was written as he sailed or weltered on that sea which was soon to engulf him.

The heats set in, in the middle of June; the days became excessively hot, but the sea breeze cooled the air at noon, and extreme heat always put Shelley in spirits: a long drought had preceded the heat, and prayers for rain were being put up in the churches, and processions of relics for the same effect took place in every town. At this time we received letters announcing the arrival of Leigh Hunt at Pisa. Shelley was very eager to see him. I was confined to my room by severe illness, and could not move; it was agreed that Shelley and Williams should go to Leghorn in the boat. Strange that no fear of danger crossed our minds! Living on the seashore, the ocean became as a plaything: as a child may sport with a lighted stick, till a spark inflames a forest and spreads destruction over all, so did we fearlessly and blindly tamper with danger, and make a game of the terrors of the ocean. Our Italian neighbours even trusted themselves as far as Massa in the skiff; and the running down the line of coast to Leghorn, gave no more notion of peril than a fair-weather inland navigation would have done to those who had never seen the sea. Once, some months before, Trelawny had raised a warning voice as to the difference of our calm bay, and the open sea beyond; but Shelley and his friend, with their one sailor boy, thought themselves a match for the storms of the Mediterranean, in a boat which they looked upon as equal to all it was put to do.

On the 1st of July they left us. If ever shadow of future ill darkened the present hour, such was over my mind when they went. During the whole of our stay at

Lerici, an intense presentiment of coming evil brooded over my mind, and covered this beautiful place, and genial summer, with the shadow of coming misery—I had vainly struggled with these emotions—they seemed accounted for by my illness, but at this hour of separation they recurred with renewed violence. I did not anticipate danger for them, but a vague expectation of evil shook me to agony, and I could scarcely bring myself to let them go. The day was calm and clear, and a fine breeze rising at twelve they weighed for Leghorn; they made the run of about fifty miles in seven hours and a half: the Bolivar was in port, and the regulations of the health-office not permitting them to go on shore after sunset, they borrowed cushions from the larger vessel, and slept on board their boat.

They spent a week at Pisa and Leghorn. The want of rain was severely felt in the country. The weather continued sultry and fine. I have heard that Shelley all this time was in brilliant spirits. Not long before, talking of presentiment, he had said the only one that he ever found infallible, was the certain advent of some evil fortune when he felt peculiarly joyous. Yet if ever fate whispered of coming disaster, such inaudible, but not unfelt, prognostics hovered around us. The beauty of the place seemed unearthly in its excess: the distance we were at from all signs of civilization, the sea at our feet, its murmurs or its roaring for ever in our ears,—all these things led the mind to brood over strange thoughts, and, lifting it from everyday life, caused it to be familiar with the unreal. A sort of spell surrounded us, and each day, as the voyagers did not return, we grew restless and disquieted, and yet, strange to say, we were not fearful of the most apparent danger.

The spell snapped, it was all over; an interval of agonizing doubt—of days passed in miserable journeys to gain tidings, of hopes that took firmer root, even as they were more baseless—were changed to the certainty of the death that eclipsed all happiness for the survivors for evermore.

There was something in our fate peculiarly harrowing. The remains of those we lost were cast on shore; but by the quarantine laws of the coast, we were not permitted to have possession of them—the laws, with respect to every-

thing cast on land by the sea, being, that such should be burned, to prevent the possibility of any remnant bringing the plague into Italy; and no representation could alter the law. At length, through the kind and unwearied exertions of Mr. Dawkins, our Chargé d'Affaires at Florence, we gained permission to receive the ashes after the bodies were consumed. Nothing could equal the zeal of Trelawny in carrying our wishes into effect. He was indefatigable in his exertions, and full of forethought and sagacity in his arrangements. It was a fearful task: he stood before us at last, his hands scorched and blistered by the flames of the funeral pyre, and by touching the burnt relics as he placed them in the receptacles prepared for the purpose. And there, in compass of that small case, was gathered all that remained on earth of him whose genius and virtue were a crown of glory to the world—whose love had been the source of happiness, peace, and good,—to be buried with him!

The concluding stanzas of the *Adonais* pointed out where the remains ought to be deposited; in addition to which our beloved child lay buried in the cemetery at Rome. Thither Shelley's ashes were conveyed, and they rest beneath one of the antique weed-grown towers that recur at intervals in the circuit of the massy ancient wall of Rome. The vignette of the title page,¹ is taken from a sketch made on the spot by Captain Roberts. He selected the hallowed place himself; there is the

Sepulchre,

O, not of him, but of our joy!—

* * * * *

And grey walls moulder round, on which dull Time
Feeds like slow fire upon a hoary brand;
And one keen pyramid, with wedge sublime.
Pavilioning the dust of him who planned
This refuge for his memory, doth stand
Like flame transformed to marble; and beneath
A field is spread, on which a newer band
Have pitched in Heaven's smile their camp of death,
Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguished breath.

¹ To be seen in Vol. III of Mr. Rossetti's edition of 1878, and in most of Mrs. Shelley's editions. It

is difficult to imagine how and from what point of view Roberts can have produced anything so unlike the place.

Could sorrow for the lost, and shuddering anguish at the vacancy left behind, be soothed by poetic imaginations, there was something in Shelley's fate to mitigate pangs, which yet alas! could not be so mitigated; for hard reality brings too miserably home to the mourner, all that is lost of happiness, all of lonely unsolaced struggle that remains. Still though dreams and hues of poetry cannot blunt grief, it invests his fate with a sublime fitness, which those less nearly allied may regard with complacency. A year before, he had poured into verse all such ideas about death as give it a glory of its own. He had, as it now seems, almost anticipated his own destiny; and when the mind figures his skiff wrapped from sight by the thunderstorm,¹ as it was last seen upon the purple sea; and then, as the cloud of the tempest passed away, no sign remained of where it had been—who but will regard as a prophecy the last stanza of the "Adonais?"

The breath, whose might I have invoked in song,
Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven,
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng,
Whose sails were never to the tempest given;
The massy earth and sphered skies are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;
Whilst burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

¹ Captain Roberts watched the vessel with his glass from the top of the light-house of Leghorn, on its homeward track. They were off Via Reggio, at some distance from shore, when a storm was driven over the sea. It enveloped them and several larger vessels in darkness. When the cloud passed onward, Roberts looked again, and saw every other vessel sailing on the ocean except their little schooner, which had vanished. From that time he could scarcely doubt the fatal truth; yet we fancied that they might have been driven towards Elba, or Corsica, and so be saved. The

observation made as to the spot where the boat disappeared, caused it to be found, through the exertions of Trelawny, for that effect. It had gone down in ten fathom water; it had not capsized, and, except such things as had floated from her, everything was found on board exactly as it had been placed when they sailed. The boat itself was uninjured. Roberts possessed himself of her, and decked her, but she proved not sea-worthy, and her shattered planks now lie rotting on the shore of one of the Ionian islands, on which she was wrecked.—*M. S.*

Putney, May 1st, 1839.

POEMS

PUBLISHED IN SHELLEY'S LIFE-TIME:

ALASTOR (1816) TO HELLAS (1822).

ALASTOR;

OR,

THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE: AND OTHER POEMS.

PREFACE.

THE poem entitled 'ALASTOR,' may be considered as allegorical of one of the most interesting situations of the human mind. It represents a youth of uncorrupted feelings and adventurous genius led forth by an imagination inflamed and purified through familiarity with all that is excellent and majestic, to the contemplation of the universe. He drinks deep of the fountains of knowledge, and is still insatiate. The magnificence and beauty of the external world sinks profoundly into the frame of his conceptions, and affords to their modifications a variety not to be exhausted. So long as it is possible for his desires to point towards objects thus infinite and unmeasured, he is joyous, and tranquil, and self-possessed. But the period arrives when these objects cease to suffice. His mind is at length suddenly awakened and thirsts for intercourse with an intelligence similar to itself. He images to himself the Being whom he loves. Conversant with speculations of the sublimest and most perfect natures, the vision in which he embodies his own imaginations unites all of wonderful, or wise, or beautiful, which the poet, the philosopher, or the lover could depicture. The intellectual faculties, the imagination, the functions of sense, have their respective requisitions on the sympathy of corresponding powers in other human beings. The Poet is represented as uniting these requisitions, and attaching them to a single image. He seeks in vain for a prototype of his conception. Blasted by his disappointment, he descends to an untimely grave.

The picture is not barren of instruction to actual men. The Poet's self-centred seclusion was avenged by the furies of an irresistible passion pursuing him to speedy ruin. But that Power which strikes the luminaries of the world with sudden darkness and extinction, by awakening them to too exquisite a perception of its influences, dooms to a slow and poisonous decay those meaner spirits that dare to abjure its dominion. Their destiny is more abject and inglorious as their delinquency is more contemptible and pernicious. They who, deluded by no generous error, instigated by no sacred thirst of doubtful knowledge, duped by no illustrious superstition, loving nothing on this earth, and cherishing no hopes beyond, yet keep aloof from sympathies with their kind, rejoicing neither in human joy nor mourning with human grief; these, and such as they, have their apportioned curse. They languish, because none feel with them their common nature. They are morally dead. They are neither friends, nor lovers, nor fathers, nor citizens of the world, nor benefactors of their country. Among those who attempt to exist without human sympathy, the pure and tender-hearted perish through the intensity and passion of their search after its communities, when the vacancy of their spirit suddenly makes itself felt. All else, selfish, blind, and torpid, are those unforeseeing multitudes who constitute, together with their own, the lasting misery and loneliness of the world. Those who love not their fellow-beings, live unfruitful lives, and prepare for their old age a miserable grave.

‘The good die first,
And those whose hearts are dry as summer dust,
Burn to the socket!’

The Fragment, entitled ‘THE DÆMON OF THE WORLD,’ is a detached part of a poem which the author does not intend for publication. The metre in which it is composed is that of *Samson Agonistes* and the Italian pastoral drama, and may be considered as the natural measure into which poetical conceptions, expressed in harmonious language, necessarily fall.

December 14, 1815.

ALASTOR;

OR,

THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE.

Nondum amabam, et amare amabam, quærebam quid amarem, amans amare.

—*Confess. St. August.*

EARTH, ocean, air, belovèd brotherhood!
If our great Mother has imbued my soul
With aught of natural piety to feel
Your love, and recompense the boon with mine;
If dewy morn, and odorous noon, and even, 5
With sunset and its gorgeous ministers,
And solemn midnight's tingling silentness;
If autumn's hollow sighs in the sere wood,
And winter robing with pure snow and crowns
Of starry ice the gray grass and bare boughs; 10
If spring's voluptuous pantings when she breathes
Her first sweet kisses, have been dear to me;
If no bright bird, insect, or gentle beast
I consciously have injured, but still loved
And cherished these my kindred; then forgive 15
This boast, belovèd brethren, and withdraw
No portion of your wonted favour now!

Mother of this unfathomable world!
Favour my solemn song, for I have loved
Thee ever, and thee only; I have watched 20
Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps,

And my heart ever gazes on the depth
Of thy deep mysteries. I have made my bed
In charnels and on coffins, where black death
Keeps record of the trophies won from thee, 25
Hoping to still these obstinate questionings
Of thee and thine, by forcing some lone ghost
Thy messenger, to render up the tale
Of what we are. In lone and silent hours,
When night makes a weird sound of its own stillness, 30
Like an inspired and desperate alchymist
Staking his very life on some dark hope,
Have I mixed awful talk and asking looks
With my most innocent love, until strange tears
Uniting with those breathless kisses, made 35
Such magic as compels the charmed night
To render up thy charge: . . . and, though ne'er yet
Thou hast unveiled thy inmost sanctuary,
Enough from incommunicable dream,
And twilight phantasms, and deep noonday thought, 40
Has shone within me, that serenely now
And moveless, as a long-forgotten lyre
Suspended in the solitary dome
Of some mysterious and deserted fane,
I wait thy breath, Great Parent, that my strain 45
May modulate with murmurs of the air,
And motions of the forests and the sea,
And voice of living beings, and woven hymns
Of night and day, and the deep heart of man.

There was a Poet whose untimely tomb 50
No human hands with pious reverence reared,
But the charmed eddies of autumnal winds
Built o'er his mouldering bones a pyramid
Of mouldering leaves in the waste wilderness:—
A lovely youth,—no mourning maiden decked 55
With weeping flowers, or votive cypress wreath,
The lone couch of his everlasting sleep:—
Gentle, and brave, and generous,—no lorn bard
Breathed o'er his dark fate one melodious sigh:
He lived, he died, he sung, in solitude. 60

Strangers have wept to hear his passionate notes,
And virgins, as unknown he past, have pined
And wasted for fond love of his wild eyes.
The fire of those soft orbs has ceased to burn,
And Silence, too enamoured of that voice, 65
Locks its mute music in her rugged cell.

By solemn vision, and bright silver dream,
His infancy was nurtured. Every sight
And sound from the vast earth and ambient air,
Sent to his heart its choicest impulses. 70
The fountains of divine philosophy
Fled not his thirsting lips, and all of great,
Or good, or lovely, which the sacred past
In truth or fable consecrates, he felt
And knew. When early youth had past, he left 75
His cold fireside and alienated home
To seek strange truths in undiscovered lands.
Many a wide waste and tangled wilderness
Has lured his fearless steps; and he has bought
With his sweet voice and eyes, from savage men, 80
His rest and food. Nature's most secret steps
He like her shadow has pursued, where'er
The red volcano overcanopies
Its fields of snow and pinnacles of ice
With burning smoke, or where bitumen lakes 85
On black bare pointed islets ever beat
With sluggish surge, or where the secret caves
Rugged and dark, winding among the springs
Of fire and poison, inaccessible
To avarice or pride, their starry domes 90
Of diamond and of gold expand above
Numberless and immeasurable halls,
Frequent with crystal column, and clear shrines
Of pearl, and thrones radiant with chrysolite.
Nor had that scene of ampler majesty 95
Than gems or gold, the varying roof of heaven
And the green earth lost in his heart its claims
To love and wonder; he would linger long
In lonesome vales, making the wild his home,

Until the doves and squirrels would partake 100
 From his innocuous hand his bloodless food,
 Lured by the gentle meaning of his looks,
 And the wild antelope, that starts whene'er
 The dry leaf rustles in the brake, suspend
 Her timid steps to gaze upon a form 105
 More graceful than her own.

His wandering step
 Obedient to high thoughts, has visited
 The awful ruins of the days of old:
 Athens, and Tyre, and Balbec, and the waste
 Where stood Jerusalem, the fallen towers 110
 Of Babylon, the eternal pyramids,
 Memphis and Thebes, and whatsoever of strange
 Sculptured on alabaster obelisk,
 Or jasper tomb, or mutilated sphynx,
 Dark Æthiopia in her desert hills 115
 Conceals. Among the ruined temples there,
 Stupendous columns; and wild images
 Of more than man, where marble dæmons watch
 The Zodiac's brazen mystery, and dead men
 Hang their mute thoughts on the mute walls around, 120
 He lingered, poring on memorials
 Of the world's youth, through the long burning day
 Gazed on those speechless shapes, nor, when the moon
 Filled the mysterious halls with floating shades
 Suspended he that task, but ever gazed 125
 And gazed, till meaning on his vacant mind
 Flashed like strong inspiration, and he saw
 The thrilling secrets of the birth of time.

Meanwhile an Arab maiden brought his food,
 Her daily portion, from her father's tent, 130
 And spread her matting for his couch, and stole
 From duties and repose to tend his steps:—
 Enamoured, yet not daring for deep awe
 To speak her love:—and watched his nightly sleep,
 Sleepless herself, to gaze upon his lips 135
 Parted in slumber, whence the regular breath
 Of innocent dreams arose: then, when red morn

Made paler the pale moon, to her cold home
Wildered, and wan, and panting, she returned.

The Poet wandering on, through Arabie 140
And Persia, and the wild Carmanian waste,
And o'er the aërial mountains which pour down
Indus and Oxus from their icy caves,
In joy and exultation held his way;
Till in the vale of Cashmire, far within 145
Its loneliest dell, where odorous plants entwine
Beneath the hollow rocks a natural bower,
Beside a sparkling rivulet he stretched
His languid limbs. A vision on his sleep
There came, a dream of hopes that never yet 150
Had flushed his cheek. He dreamed a veiled maid
Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.
Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
Heard in the calm of thought; its music long,
Like woven sounds of streams and breezes, held 155
His inmost sense suspended in its web
Of many-coloured woof and shifting hues.
Knowledge and truth and virtue were her theme,
And lofty hopes of divine liberty,
Thoughts the most dear to him, and poesy, 160
Herself a poet. Soon the solemn mood
Of her pure mind kindled through all her frame
A permeating fire: wild numbers then
She raised, with voice stifled in tremulous sobs
Subdued by its own pathos: her fair hands 165
Were bare alone, sweeping from some strange harp
Strange symphony, and in their branching veins
The eloquent blood told an ineffable tale.
The beating of her heart was heard to fill
The pauses of her music, and her breath 170
Tumultuously accorded with those fits
Of intermitted song. Sudden she rose,
As if her heart impatiently endured
Its bursting burthen: at the sound he turned,
And saw by the warm light of their own life 175
Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil

Of woven wind, her outspread arms now bare,
Her dark locks floating in the breath of night,
Her beamy bending eyes, her parted lips
Outstretched, and pale, and quivering eagerly. 180
His strong heart sunk and sickened with excess
Of love. He reared his shuddering limbs and quelled
His gasping breath, and spread his arms to meet
Her panting bosom : . . . she drew back a while,
Then, yielding to the irresistible joy, 185
With frantic gesture and short breathless cry
Folded his frame in her dissolving arms.
Now blackness veiled his dizzy eyes, and night
Involved and swallowed up the vision ; sleep,
Like a dark flood suspended in its course, 190
Rolled back its impulse on his vacant brain.

Roused by the shock he started from his trance—
The cold white light of morning, the blue moon
Low in the west, the clear and garish hills,
The distinct valley and the vacant woods, 195
Spread round him where he stood. Whither have fled
The hues of heaven that canopied his bower
Of yesternight ? The sounds that soothed his sleep,
The mystery and the majesty of Earth,
The joy, the exultation ? His wan eyes 200
Gaze on the empty scene as vacantly
As ocean's moon looks on the moon in heaven.
The spirit of sweet human love has sent
A vision to the sleep of him who spurned
Her choicest gifts. He eagerly pursues 205
Beyond the realms of dream that fleeting shade ;
He overleaps the bounds. Alas ! alas !
Were limbs, and breath, and being intertwined
Thus treacherously ? Lost, lost, for ever lost,
In the wide pathless desert of dim sleep, 210
That beautiful shape ! Does the dark gate of death
Conduct to thy mysterious paradise,
O Sleep ? Does the bright arch of rainbow clouds,
And pendent mountains seen in the calm lake,
Lead only to a black and watery depth, 215

While death's blue vault, with loathliest vapours hung,
Where every shade which the foul grave exhales
Hides its dead eye from the detested day,
Conduct, O Sleep, to thy delightful realms?
This doubt with sudden tide flowed on his heart, 220
The insatiate hope which it awakened, stung
His brain even like despair.

While day-light held
The sky, the Poet kept mute conference
With his still soul. At night the passion came,
Like the fierce fiend of a distempered dream, 225
And shook him from his rest, and led him forth
Into the darkness.—As an eagle grasped
In folds of the green serpent, feels her breast
Burn with the poison, and precipitates
Through night and day, tempest, and calm, and cloud,
Frantic with dizzying anguish, her blind flight 231
O'er the wide æry wilderness: thus driven
By the bright shadow of that lovely dream,
Beneath the cold glare of the desolate night,
Through tangled swamps and deep precipitous dells, 235
Startling with careless step the moon-light snake,
He fled. Red morning dawned upon his flight,
Shedding the mockery of its vital hues
Upon his cheek of death. He wandered on
Till vast Aornos seen from Petra's steep 240
Hung o'er the low horizon like a cloud;
Through Balk, and where the desolated tombs
Of Parthian kings scatter to every wind
Their wasting dust, wildly he wandered on,
Day after day, a weary waste of hours, 245
Bearing within his life the brooding care
That ever fed on its decaying flame.
And now his limbs were lean; his scattered hair
Sered by the autumn of strange suffering
Sung dirges in the wind; his listless hand 250
Hung like dead bone within its withered skin;
Life, and the lustre that consumed it, shone
As in a furnace burning secretly
From his dark eyes alone. The cottagers,

Who ministered with human charity 255
His human wants, beheld with wondering awe
Their fleeting visitant. The mountaineer,
Encountering on some dizzy precipice
That spectral form, deemed that the Spirit of wind
With lightning eyes, and eager breath, and feet 260
Disturbing not the drifted snow, had paused
In its career: the infant would conceal
His troubled visage in his mother's robe
In terror at the glare of those wild eyes,
To remember their strange light in many a dream 265
Of after-times; but youthful maidens, taught
By nature, would interpret half the woe
That wasted him, would call him with false names
Brother, and friend, would press his pallid hand
At parting, and watch, dim through tears, the path 270
Of his departure from their father's door.

At length upon the lone Chorasmanian shore
He paused, a wide and melancholy waste
Of putrid marshes. A strong impulse urged
His steps to the sea-shore. A swan was there, 275
Beside a sluggish stream among the reeds.
It rose as he approached, and with strong wings
Scaling the upward sky, bent its bright course
High over the immeasurable main.
His eyes pursued its flight.—“Thou hast a home, 280
Beautiful bird; thou voyagest to thine home,
Where thy sweet mate will twine her downy neck
With thine, and welcome thy return with eyes
Bright in the lustre of their own fond joy.
And what am I that I should linger here, 285
With voice far sweeter than thy dying notes,
Spirit more vast than thine, frame more attuned
To beauty, wasting these surpassing powers
In the deaf air, to the blind earth, and heaven
That echoes not my thoughts?” A gloomy smile 290
Of desperate hope wrinkled his quivering lips.
For sleep, he knew, kept most relentlessly
Its precious charge, and silent death exposed,

Faithless perhaps as sleep, a shadowy lure, 294
With doubtful smile mocking its own strange charms.

Startled by his own thoughts he looked around.
There was no fair fiend near him, not a sight
Or sound of awe but in his own deep mind.
A little shallop floating near the shore
Caught the impatient wandering of his gaze. 300
It had been long abandoned, for its sides
Gaped wide with many a rift, and its frail joints
Swayed with the undulations of the tide.
A restless impulse urged him to embark
And meet lone Death on the drear ocean's waste; 305
For well he knew that mighty Shadow loves
The slimy caverns of the populous deep.

The day was fair and sunny, sea and sky
Drank its inspiring radiance, and the wind
Swept strongly from the shore, blackening the waves.
Following his eager soul, the wanderer 311
Leaped in the boat, he spread his cloak aloft
On the bare mast, and took his lonely seat,
And felt the boat speed o'er the tranquil sea
Like a torn cloud before the hurricane. 315

As one that in a silver vision floats
Obedient to the sweep of odorous winds
Upon resplendent clouds, so rapidly
Along the dark and ruffled waters fled
The straining boat.—A whirlwind swept it on, 320
With fierce gusts and precipitating force,
Through the white ridges of the chafed sea.
The waves arose. Higher and higher still
Their fierce necks writhed beneath the tempest's scourge
Like serpents struggling in a vulture's grasp. 325
Calm and rejoicing in the fearful war
Of wave ruining on wave, and blast on blast
Descending, and black flood on whirlpool driven
With dark obliterating course, he sate:
As if their genii were the ministers 330

Appointed to conduct him to the light
 Of those belovèd eyes, the Poet sate
 Holding the steady helm. Evening came on,
 The beams of sunset hung their rainbow hues
 High 'mid the shifting domes of sheeted spray 335
 That canopied his path o'er the waste deep;
 Twilight, ascending slowly from the east,
 Entwined in duskier wreaths her braided locks
 O'er the fair front and radiant eyes of day;
 Night followed, clad with stars. On every side 340
 More horribly the multitudinous streams
 Of ocean's mountainous waste to mutual war
 Rushed in dark tumult thundering, as to mock
 The calm and spangled sky. The little boat
 Still fled before the storm; still fled, like foam 345
 Down the steep cataract of a wintry river;
 Now pausing on the edge of the riven wave;
 Now leaving far behind the bursting mass
 That fell, convulsing ocean. Safely fled—
 As if that frail and wasted human form, 350
 Had been an elemental god.

At midnight

The moon arose: and lo! the etherial cliffs
 Of Caucasus, whose icy summits shone
 Among the stars like sunlight, and around
 Whose caverned base the whirlpools and the waves 355
 Bursting and eddying irresistibly
 Rage and resound for ever.—Who shall save?—
 The boat fled on,—the boiling torrent drove,—
 The crags closed round with black and jagged arms,
 The shattered mountain overhung the sea, 360
 And faster still, beyond all human speed,
 Suspended on the sweep of the smooth wave,
 The little boat was driven. A cavern there
 Yawned, and amid its slant and winding depths
 Ingulphed the rushing sea. The boat fled on 365
 With unrelaxing speed.—'Vision and Love!'
 The Poet cried aloud, 'I have beheld
 The path of thy departure. Sleep and death
 Shall not divide us long!'

The boat pursued
The windings of the cavern. Day-light shone 370
At length upon that gloomy river's flow;
Now, where the fiercest war among the waves
Is calm, on the unfathomable stream
The boat moved slowly. Where the mountain, riven,
Exposed those black depths to the azure sky, 375
Ere yet the flood's enormous volume fell
Even to the base of Caucasus, with sound
That shook the everlasting rocks, the mass
Filled with one whirlpool all that ample chasm;
Stair above stair the eddying waters rose, 380
Circling immeasurably fast, and laved
With alternating dash the knarlèd roots
Of mighty trees, that stretched their giant arms
In darkness over it. I' the midst was left,
Reflecting, yet distorting every cloud, 385
A pool of treacherous and tremendous calm.
Seized by the sway of the ascending stream,
With dizzy swiftness, round, and round, and round,
Ridge after ridge the straining boat arose,
Till on the verge of the extremest curve, 390
Where, through an opening of the rocky bank,
The waters overflow, and a smooth spot
Of glassy quiet mid those battling tides
Is left, the boat paused shuddering.—Shall it sink
Down the abyss? Shall the reverting stress 395
Of that resistless gulph embosom it?
Now shall it fall?—A wandering stream of wind,
Breathed from the west, has caught the expanded sail,
And, lo! with gentle motion, between banks
Of mossy slope, and on a placid stream, 400
Beneath a woven grove it sails, and, hark!
The ghastly torrent mingles its far roar,
With the breeze murmuring in the musical woods.
Where the embowering trees recede, and leave
A little space of green expanse, the cove 405
Is closed by meeting banks, whose yellow flowers
For ever gaze on their own drooping eyes,
Reflected in the crystal calm. The wave

Of the boat's motion marred their pensive task,
 Which nought but vagrant bird, or wanton wind, 410
 Or falling spear-grass, or their own decay
 Had e'er disturbed before. The Poet longed
 To deck with their bright hues his withered hair,
 But on his heart its solitude returned,
 And he forbore. Not the strong impulse hid 415
 In those flushed cheeks, bent eyes, and shadowy frame
 Had yet performed its ministry: it hung
 Upon his life, as lightning in a cloud
 Gleams, hovering ere it vanish, ere the floods
 Of night close over it.

The noonday sun 420

Now shone upon the forest, one vast mass
 Of mingling shade, whose brown magnificence
 A narrow vale embosoms. There, huge caves,
 Scooped in the dark base of their æry rocks
 Mocking its moans, respond and roar for ever. 425
 The meeting boughs and implicated leaves
 Wove twilight o'er the Poet's path, as led
 By love, or dream, or god, or mightier Death,
 He sought in Nature's dearest haunt, some bank,
 Her cradle, and his sepulchre. More dark 430
 And dark the shades accumulate. The oak,
 Expanding its immense and knotty arms,
 Embraces the light beech. The pyramids
 Of the tall cedar overarching, frame
 Most solemn domes within, and far below, 435
 Like clouds suspended in an emerald sky,
 The ash and the acacia floating hang
 Tremulous and pale. Like restless serpents, clothed
 In rainbow and in fire, the parasites,
 Starred with ten thousand blossoms, flow around 440
 The gray trunks, and, as gamesome infants' eyes,
 With gentle meanings, and most innocent wiles,
 Fold their beams round the hearts of those that love,
 These twine their tendrils with the wedded boughs
 Uniting their close union; the woven leaves 445
 Make net-work of the dark blue light of day,
 And the night's noontide clearness, mutable

As shapes in the weird clouds. Soft mossy lawns
 Beneath these canopies extend their swells,
 Fragrant with perfumed herbs, and eyed with blooms 450
 Minute yet beautiful. One darkest glen
 Sends from its woods of musk-rose, twined with jasmine,
 A soul-dissolving odour, to invite
 To some more lovely mystery. Through the dell,
 Silence and Twilight here, twin-sisters, keep 455
 Their noonday watch, and sail among the shades,
 Like vaporous shapes half seen; beyond, a well,
 Dark, gleaming, and of most translucent wave,
 Images all the woven boughs above,
 And each depending leaf, and every speck 460
 Of azure sky, darting between their chasms;
 Nor aught else in the liquid mirror laves
 Its portraiture, but some inconstant star
 Between one foliaged lattice twinkling fair,
 Or, painted bird, sleeping beneath the moon, 465
 Or gorgeous insect floating motionless,
 Unconscious of the day, ere yet his wings
 Have spread their glories to the gaze of noon.

Hither the Poet came. His eyes beheld
 Their own wan light through the reflected lines 470
 Of his thin hair, distinct in the dark depth
 Of that still fountain; as the human heart,
 Gazing in dreams over the gloomy grave,
 Sees its own treacherous likeness there. He heard
 The motion of the leaves, the grass that sprung 475
 Startled and glanced and trembled even to feel
 An unaccustomed presence, and the sound
 Of the sweet brook that from the secret springs
 Of that dark fountain rose. A Spirit seemed
 To stand beside him—clothed in no bright robes 480
 Of shadowy silver or enshrining light,
 Borrowed from aught the visible world affords
 Of grace, or majesty, or mystery;—
 But, undulating woods, and silent well,
 And leaping rivulet, and evening gloom 485
 Now deepening the dark shades, for speech assuming,

Held commune with him, as if he and it
Were all that was,—only . . . when his regard
Was raised by intense pensiveness, . . . two eyes,
Two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought, 490
And seemed with their serene and azure smiles
To beckon him.

Obedient to the light
That shone within his soul, he went, pursuing
The windings of the dell.—The rivulet
Wanton and wild, through many a green ravine 495
Beneath the forest flowed. Sometimes it fell
Among the moss with hollow harmony
Dark and profound. Now on the polished stones
It danced; like childhood laughing as it went:
Then, through the plain in tranquil wanderings crept, 500
Reflecting every herb and drooping bud
That overhung its quietness.—‘O stream!
Whose source is inaccessible profound,
Whither do thy mysterious waters tend?
Thou imagest my life. Thy darksome stillness, 505
Thy dazzling waves, thy loud and hollow gulphs,
Thy searchless fountain, and invisible course
Have each their type in me: and the wide sky,
And measureless ocean may declare as soon
What oozy cavern or what wandering cloud 510
Contains thy waters, as the universe
Tell where these living thoughts reside, when stretched
Upon thy flowers my bloodless limbs shall waste
I’ the passing wind!’

Beside the grassy shore
Of the small stream he went; he did impress 515
On the green moss his tremulous step, that caught
Strong shuddering from his burning limbs. As one
Roused by some joyous madness from the couch
Of fever, he did move; yet, not like him,
Forgetful of the grave, where, when the flame 520
Of his frail exultation shall be spent,
He must descend. With rapid steps he went
Beneath the shade of trees, beside the flow

Of the wild babbling rivulet; and now
 The forest's solemn canopies were changed 525
 For the uniform and lightsome evening sky.
 Gray rocks did peep from the spare moss, and stemmed
 The struggling brook: tall spires of windlestrae
 Threw their thin shadows down the rugged slope,
 And nought but knarled roots of ancient pines 530
 Branchless and blasted, clenched with grasping roots
 The unwilling soil. A gradual change was here,
 Yet ghastly. For, as fast years flow away,
 The smooth brow gathers, and the hair grows thin
 And white, and where irradiate dewy eyes 535
 Had shone, gleam stony orbs:—so from his steps
 Bright flowers departed, and the beautiful shade
 Of the green groves, with all their odorous winds
 And musical motions. Calm, he still pursued
 The stream, that with a larger volume now 540
 Rolled through the labyrinthine dell; and there
 Fretted a path through its descending curves
 With its wintry speed. On every side now rose
 Rocks, which, in unimaginable forms,
 Lifted their black and barren pinnacles 545
 In the light of evening, and its precipice
 Obscuring the ravine, disclosed above,
 Mid toppling stones, black gulphs and yawning caves,
 Whose windings gave ten thousand various tongues
 To the loud stream. Lo! where the pass expands 550
 Its stony jaws, the abrupt mountain breaks,
 And seems, with its accumulated crags,
 To overhang the world: for wide expand
 Beneath the wan stars and descending moon
 Islanded seas, blue mountains, mighty streams, 555
 Dim tracts and vast, robed in the lustrous gloom
 Of leaden-coloured even, and fiery hills
 Mingling their flames with twilight, on the verge
 Of the remote horizon. The near scene,
 In naked and severe simplicity, 560
 Made contrast with the universe. A pine,
 Rock-rooted, stretched athwart the vacancy
 Its swinging boughs, to each inconstant blast

Yielding one only response, at each pause
 In most familiar cadence, with the howl 565
 The thunder and the hiss of homeless streams
 Mingling its solemn song, whilst the broad river,
 Foaming and hurrying o'er its rugged path,
 Fell into that immeasurable void
 Scattering its waters to the passing winds. 570

Yet the gray precipice and solemn pine
 And torrent, were not all;—one silent nook
 Was there. Even on the edge of that vast mountain,
 Upheld by knotty roots and fallen rocks,
 It overlooked in its serenity 575
 The dark earth, and the bending vault of stars.
 It was a tranquil spot, that seemed to smile
 Even in the lap of horror. Ivy clasped
 The fissured stones with its entwining arms,
 And did embower with leaves for ever green, 580
 And berries dark, the smooth and even space
 Of its inviolated floor, and here
 The children of the autumnal whirlwind bore,
 In wanton sport, those bright leaves, whose decay,
 Red, yellow, or etherially pale, 585
 Rivals the pride of summer. 'Tis the haunt
 Of every gentle wind, whose breath can teach
 The wilds to love tranquillity. One step,
 One human step alone, has ever broken
 The stillness of its solitude :—one voice 590
 Alone inspired its echoes;—even that voice
 Which hither came, floating among the winds,
 And led the loveliest among human forms
 To make their wild haunts the depository
 Of all the grace and beauty that endued 595
 Its motions, render up its majesty,
 Scatter its music on the unfeeling storm,
 And to the damp leaves and blue cavern mould,
 Nurses of rainbow flowers and branching moss,
 Commit the colours of that varying cheek, 600
 That snowy breast, those dark and drooping eyes.

The dim and hornèd moon hung low, and poured
 A sea of lustre on the horizon's verge
 That overflowed its mountains. Yellow mist
 Filled the unbounded atmosphere, and drank 605
 Wan moonlight even to fulness: not a star
 Shone, not a sound was heard; the very winds,
 Danger's grim playmates, on that precipice
 Slept, clasped in his embrace.—O, storm of death!
 Whose sightless speed divides this sullen night: 610
 And thou, colossal Skeleton, that, still
 Guiding its irresistible career
 In thy devastating omnipotence,
 Art king of this frail world, from the red field
 Of slaughter, from the reeking hospital, 615
 The patriot's sacred couch, the snowy bed
 Of innocence, the scaffold and the throne,
 A mighty voice invokes thee. Ruin calls
 His brother Death. A rare and regal prey
 He hath prepared, prowling around the world; 620
 Glutted with which thou mayst repose, and men
 Go to their graves like flowers or creeping worms,
 Nor ever more offer at thy dark shrine
 The unheeded tribute of a broken heart.

When on the threshold of the green recess 625
 The wanderer's footsteps fell, he knew that death
 Was on him. Yet a little, ere it fled,
 Did he resign his high and holy soul
 To images of the majestic past,
 That paused within his passive being now, 630
 Like winds that bear sweet music, when they breathe
 Through some dim latticed chamber. He did place
 His pale lean hand upon the rugged trunk
 Of the old pine. Upon an ivied stone
 Reclined his languid head, his limbs did rest, 635
 Diffused and motionless, on the smooth brink
 Of that obscurest chasm;—and thus he lay,
 Surrendering to their final impulses
 The hovering powers of life. Hope and despair,
 The torturers, slept; no mortal pain or fear 640

Marred his repose, the influxes of sense,
 And his own being unalloyed by pain,
 Yet feebler and more feeble, calmly fed
 The stream of thought, till he lay breathing there
 At peace, and faintly smiling:—his last sight 645
 Was the great moon, which o'er the western line
 Of the wide world her mighty horn suspended,
 With whose dun beams inwoven darkness seemed
 To mingle. Now upon the jagged hills
 It rests, and still as the divided frame 650
 Of the vast meteor sunk, the Poet's blood,
 That ever beat in mystic sympathy
 With nature's ebb and flow, grew feebler still:
 And when two lessening points of light alone
 Gleamed through the darkness, the alternate gasp 655
 Of his faint respiration scarce did stir
 The stagnate night:—till the minutest ray
 Was quenched, the pulse yet lingered in his heart.
 It paused—it fluttered. But when heaven remained
 Utterly black, the murky shades involved 660
 An image, silent, cold, and motionless,
 As their own voiceless earth and vacant air.
 Even as a vapour fed with golden beams
 That ministered on sunlight, ere the west
 Eclipses it, was now that wondrous frame— 665
 No sense, no motion, no divinity—
 A fragile lute, on whose harmonious strings
 The breath of heaven did wander—a bright stream
 Once fed with many-voicèd waves—a dream
 Of youth, which night and time have quenched for ever, 670
 Still, dark, and dry, and unremembered now.

O, for Medea's wondrous alchemy,
 Which wheresoe'er it fell made the earth gleam
 With bright flowers, and the wintry boughs exhale
 From vernal blooms fresh fragrance! O, that God, 675
 Profuse of poisons, would concede the chalice
 Which but one living man has drained, who now,
 Vessel of deathless wrath, a slave that feels
 No proud exemption in the blighting curse

He bears, over the world wanders for ever, 680
 Lone as incarnate death! O, that the dream
 Of dark magician in his visioned cave,
 Raking the cinders of a crucible
 For life and power, even when his feeble hand
 Shakes in its last decay, were the true law 685
 Of this so lovely world! But thou art fled
 Like some frail exhalation; which the dawn
 Robes in its golden beams,—ah! thou hast fled!
 The brave, the gentle, and the beautiful,
 The child of grace and genius. Heartless things 690
 Are done and said i' the world, and many worms
 And beasts and men live on, and mighty Earth
 From sea and mountain, city and wilderness,
 In vesper low or joyous orison,
 Lifts still its solemn voice:—but thou art fled— 695
 Thou canst no longer know or love the shapes
 Of this phantasmal scene, who have to thee
 Been purest ministers, who are, alas!
 Now thou art not. Upon those pallid lips
 So sweet even in their silence, on those eyes 700
 That image sleep in death, upon that form
 Yet safe from the worm's outrage, let no tear
 Be shed—not even in thought. Nor, when those hues
 Are gone, and those divinest lineaments,
 Worn by the senseless wind, shall live alone 705
 In the frail pauses of this simple strain,
 Let not high verse, mourning the memory
 Of that which is no more, or painting's woe
 Or sculpture, speak in feeble imagery
 Their own cold powers. Art and eloquence, 710
 And all the shews o' the world are frail and vain
 To weep a loss that turns their lights to shade.
 It is a woe too 'deep for tears,' when all
 Is reft at once, when some surpassing Spirit,
 Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves 715
 Those who remain behind, not sobs or groans,
 The passionate tumult of a clinging hope;
 But pale despair and cold tranquillity,
 Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
 Birth and the grave, that are not as they were. 720

P O E M S.

 ΔΑΚΡΥΣΙ ΔΙΟΙΣΩ ΠΟΤΜΟΝ ΑΠΟΤΜΟΝ.

[To COLERIDGE.]

O! THERE are spirits of the air,
 And genii of the evening breeze,
 And gentle ghosts, with eyes as fair
 As star-beams among twilight trees:—
 Such lovely ministers to meet 5
 Oft hast thou turned from men thy lonely feet.

With mountain winds, and babbling springs,
 And moonlight seas, that are the voice
 Of these inexplicable things
 Thou didst hold commune, and rejoice 10
 When they did answer thee; but they
 Cast, like a worthless boon, thy love away.

And thou hast sought in starry eyes
 Beams that were never meant for thine,
 Another's wealth:—tame sacrifice 15
 To a fond faith! still dost thou pine?
 Still dost thou hope that greeting hands,
 Voice, looks, or lips, may answer thy demands?

Ah! wherefore didst thou build thine hope
 On the false earth's inconstancy? 20
 Did thine own mind afford no scope
 Of love, or moving thoughts to thee?
 That natural scenes or human smiles
 Could steal the power to wind thee in their wiles.

Yes, all the faithless smiles are fled
 Whose falsehood left thee broken-hearted;
 The glory of the moon is dead;
 Night's ghosts and dreams have now departed;
 Thine own soul still is true to thee,
 But changed to a foul fiend through misery. 25 30

This fiend, whose ghastly presence ever
 Beside thee like thy shadow hangs,
 Dream not to chase;—the mad endeavour
 Would scourge thee to severer pangs.
 Be as thou art. Thy settled fate,
 Dark as it is, all change would aggravate. 35

STANZAS.—APRIL, 1814.

AWAY! the moor is dark beneath the moon,
 Rapid clouds have drank the last pale beam of even:
 Away! the gathering winds will call the darkness soon,
 And profoundest midnight shroud the serene lights of heaven.

Pause not! The time is past! Every voice cries, Away!
 Tempt not with one last tear thy friend's ungentle mood:
 Thy lover's eye, so glazed and cold, dares not entreat thy stay:
 Duty and dereliction guide thee back to solitude.

Away, away! to thy sad and silent home;
 Pour bitter tears on its desolated hearth;
 Watch the dim shades as like ghosts they go and come,
 And complicate strange webs of melancholy mirth. 10

The leaves of wasted autumn woods shall float around thine
 head:

The blooms of dewy spring shall gleam beneath thy feet:
 But thy soul or this world must fade in the frost that binds
 the dead, 15
 Ere midnight's frown and morning's smile, ere thou and
 peace may meet,

The cloud shadows of midnight possess their own repose,
 For the weary winds are silent, or the moon is in the deep:
 Some respite to its turbulence unresting ocean knows ;
 Whatever moves, or toils, or grieves, hath its appointed sleep.

Thou in the grave shalt rest—yet till the phantoms flee 21
 Which that house and heath and garden made dear to
 thee erewhile,
 Thy remembrance, and repentance, and deep musings are
 not free
 From the music of two voices and the light of one sweet
 smile.

MUTABILITY.

WE are as clouds that veil the midnight moon;
 How restlessly they speed, and gleam, and quiver,
 Streaking the darkness radiantly!—yet soon
 Night closes round, and they are lost for ever:

Or like forgotten lyres, whose dissonant strings 5
 Give various response to each varying blast,
 To whose frail frame no second motion brings
 One mood or modulation like the last.

We rest.—A dream has power to poison sleep;
 We rise.—One wandering thought pollutes the day;
 We feel, conceive or reason, laugh or weep; 11
 Embrace fond woe, or cast our cares away:

It is the same!—For, be it joy or sorrow,
 The path of its departure still is free:
 Man's yesterday may ne'er be like his morrow; 15
 Nought may endure but Mutability.

THERE IS NO WORK, NOR DEVICE, NOR KNOWLEDGE, NOR WISDOM, IN THE
BRAVE, WHITHER THOU GOEST. *Ecclesiastes.*

THE pale, the cold, and the moony smile
Which the meteor beam of a starless night
Sheds on a lonely and sea-girt isle,
Ere the dawning of morn's undoubted light,
Is the flame of life so fickle and wan 5
That flits round our steps till their strength is gone.

O man! hold thee on in courage of soul
Through the stormy shades of thy worldly way,
And the billows of cloud that around thee roll
Shall sleep in the light of a wondrous day, 10
Where hell and heaven shall leave thee free
To the universe of destiny.

This world is the nurse of all we know,
This world is the mother of all we feel,
And the coming of death is a fearful blow 15
To a brain unencompassed with nerves of steel;
When all that we know, or feel, or see,
Shall pass like an unreal mystery.

The secret things of the grave are there,
Where all but this frame must surely be, 20
Though the fine-wrought eye and the wondrous ear
No longer will live to hear or to see
All that is great and all that is strange
In the boundless realm of unending change.

Who telleth a tale of unspeaking death? 25
Who lifteth the veil of what is to come?
Who painteth the shadows that are beneath
The wide-winding caves of the peopled tomb?
Or uniteth the hopes of what shall be
With the fears and the love for that which we see? 30

A SUMMER-EVENING CHURCH-YARD,

LECHLADE, GLOUCESTERSHIRE.

THE wind has swept from the wide atmosphere
 Each vapour that obscured the sunset's ray;
 And pallid evening twines its beaming hair
 In duskier braids around the languid eyes of day:
 Silence and twilight, unbeloved of men, 5
 Creep hand in hand from yon obscurest glen.

They breathe their spells towards the departing day,
 Encompassing the earth, air, stars, and sea;
 Light, sound, and motion own the potent sway,
 Responding to the charm with its own mystery. 10
 The winds are still, or the dry church-tower grass
 Knows not their gentle motions as they pass.

Thou too, aerial Pile! whose pinnacles
 Point from one shrine like pyramids of fire,
 Obeyest in silence their sweet solemn spells, 15
 Clothing in hues of heaven thy dim and distant spire,
 Around whose lessening and invisible height
 Gather among the stars the clouds of night.

The dead are sleeping in their sepulchres:
 And, mouldering as they sleep, a thrilling sound 20
 Half sense, half thought, among the darkness stirs,
 Breathed from their wormy beds all living things around,
 And mingling with the still night and mute sky
 Its awful hush is felt inaudibly.

Thus solemnized and softened, death is mild 25
 And terrorless as this serenest night:
 Here could I hope, like some enquiring child
 Sporting on graves, that death did hide from human sight
 Sweet secrets, or beside its breathless sleep
 That loveliest dreams perpetual watch did keep. 30

TO WORDSWORTH.

POET of Nature, thou hast wept to know
That things depart which never may return:
Childhood and youth, friendship and love's first glow,
Have fled like sweet dreams, leaving thee to mourn.
These common woes I feel. One loss is mine
Which thou too feel'st, yet I alone deplore.
Thou wert as a lone star, whose light did shine
On some frail bark in winter's midnight roar:
Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood
Above the blind and battling multitude:
In honoured poverty thy voice did weave
Songs consecrate to truth and liberty,—
Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,
Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to be.

FEELINGS OF A REPUBLICAN

ON THE FALL OF BONAPARTE.

I HATED thee, fallen tyrant! I did groan
To think that a most unambitious slave,
Like thou, shouldst dance and revel on the grave
Of Liberty. Thou mightst have built thy throne
Where it had stood even now: thou didst prefer
A frail and bloody pomp which time has swept
In fragments towards oblivion. Massacre,
For this I prayed, would on thy sleep have crept
Treason and Slavery, Rapine, Fear, and Lust,
And stifled thee, their minister. I know
Too late, since thou and France are in the dust,
That virtue owns a more eternal foe
Than force or fraud: old Custom, legal Crime,
And bloody Faith the foulest birth of time.

SUPERSTITION.

[AN EXCERPT FROM QUEEN MAB.]

THOU taintest all thou lookest upon! The stars,
 Which on thy cradle beamed so brightly sweet,
 Were gods to the distempered playfulness
 Of thy untutored infancy; the trees,
 The grass, the clouds, the mountains, and the sea, 5
 All living things that walk, swim, creep, or fly,
 Were gods: the sun had homage, and the moon
 Her worshipper. Then thou becamest, a boy,
 More daring in thy frenzies: every shape,
 Monstrous or vast, or beautifully wild, 10
 Which, from sensation's relics, fancy culls;
 The spirits of the air, the shuddering ghost,
 The genii of the elements, the powers
 That give a shape to nature's varied works,
 Had life and place in the corrupt belief 15
 Of thy blind heart: yet still thy youthful hands
 Were pure of human blood. Then manhood gave
 Its strength and ardour to thy frenzied brain;
 Thine eager gaze scanned the stupendous scene,
 Whose wonders mocked the knowledge of thy pride: 20
 Their everlasting and unchanging laws
 Reproached thine ignorance. Awhile thou stoodest
 Baffled and gloomy; then thou didst sum up
 The elements of all that thou didst know;
 The changing seasons, winter's leafless reign, 25
 The budding of the heaven-breathing trees,
 The eternal orbs that beautify the night,
 The sun-rise, and the setting of the moon,
 Earthquakes and wars, and poisons and disease,
 And all their causes, to an abstract point 30
 Converging thou didst give it name, and form,
 Intelligence, and unity, and power.

SONNET.

FROM THE ITALIAN OF DANTE.

Dante Alighieri to Guido Cavalcanti.

GUIDO, I would that Lappo, thou, and I,
 Led by some strong enchantment, might ascend
 A magic ship, whose charmed sails should fly
 With winds at will where'er our thoughts might wend,
 And that no change, nor any evil chance
 Should mar our joyous voyage; but it might be,
 That even satiety should still enhance
 Between our hearts their strict community:
 And that the bounteous wizard then would place
 Vanna and Bice and my gentle love,
 Companions of our wandering, and would grace
 With passionate talk wherever we might rove
 Our time, and each were as content and free
 As I believe that thou and I should be.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK OF MOSCHUS.

Ταν ἅλα ταν γλαυκαν ὅταν ὄνεμος ἀτρεμα βαλλῇ, κ.τ.λ.

WHEN winds that move not its calm surface sweep
 The azure sea, I love the land no more;
 The smiles of the serene and tranquil deep
 Tempt my unquiet mind.—But when the roar
 Of ocean's gray abyss resounds, and foam
 Gathers upon the sea, and vast waves burst,
 I turn from the drear aspect to the home
 Of earth and its deep woods, where interspersed,
 When winds blow loud, pines make sweet melody.
 Whose house is some lone bark, whose toil the sea,
 Whose prey the wandering fish, an evil lot
 Has chosen.—But I my languid limbs will fling
 Beneath the plane, where the brook's murmuring
 Moves the calm spirit, but disturbs it not.

THE DÆMON OF THE WORLD.

A FRAGMENT [OF QUEEN MAB, REVISED.]

[PART I.]

Nec tantum prodere vati,
 Quantum scire licet. Venit ætas omnis in unam
 Congeriem, miserumque premunt tot sæcula pectus.
Lucan Phars. L. v. l. 176.

How wonderful is Death,
 Death and his brother Sleep!
 One pale as yonder wan and hornèd moon,
 With lips of lurid blue,
 The other glowing like the vital morn, 5
 When throned on ocean's wave
 It breathes over the world:
 Yet both so passing strange and wonderful!

Hath then the iron-sceptred Skeleton,
 Whose réign is in the tainted sepulchres, 10
 To the hell dogs that couch beneath his throne
 Cast that fair prey? Must that divinest form,
 Which love and admiration cannot view
 Without a beating heart, whose azure veins
 Steal like dark streams along a field of snow, 15
 Whose outline is as fair as marble clothed
 In light of some sublimest mind, decay?
 Nor putrefaction's breath
 Leave aught of this pure spectacle

But loathsomeness and ruin?—
Spare aught but a dark theme,
On which the lightest heart might moralize?
Or is it but that downy-wingèd slumbers
Have charmed their nurse coy Silence near her lids
To watch their own repose?
Will they, when morning's beam
Flows through those wells of light,
Seek far from noise and day some western cave,
Where woods and streams with soft and pausing winds
A lulling murmur weave?—
Ianthè doth not sleep
The dreamless sleep of death:
Nor in her moonlight chamber silently
Doth Henry hear her regular pulses throb,
Or mark her delicate cheek
With interchange of hues mock the broad moon,
Outwatching weary night,
Without assured reward.
Her dewy eyes are closed;
On their translucent lids, whose texture fine
Scarce hides the dark blue orbs that burn below
With unapparent fire,
The baby Sleep is pillowed:
Her golden tresses shade
The bosom's stainless pride,
Twining like tendrils of the parasite
Around a marble column.
Hark! whence that rushing sound?
'Tis like a wondrous strain that sweeps
Around a lonely ruin
When west winds sigh and evening waves respond
In whispers from the shore:
'Tis wilder than the unmeasured notes
Which from the unseen lyres of dells and groves
The genii of the breezes sweep.
Floating on waves of music and of light
The chariot of the Dæmon of the World
Descends in silent power:

- Its shape reposed within: slight as some cloud
That catches but the palest tinge of day 60
 When evening yields to night,
Bright as that fibrous woof when stars indue
 Its transitory robe.
Four shapeless shadows bright and beautiful
Draw that strange car of glory, reins of light 65
Check their unearthly speed; they stop and fold
 Their wings of braided air:
The Dæmon leaning from the etherial car
 Gazed on the slumbering maid.
Human eye hath ne'er beheld 70
A shape so wild, so bright, so beautiful,
As that which o'er the maiden's charmed sleep
 Waving a starry wand,
 Hung like a mist of light.
Such sounds as breathed around like odorous winds 75
 Of wakening spring arose,
Filling the chamber and the moonlight sky.
- Maiden, the world's supremest spirit
 Beneath the shadow of her wings
Folds all thy memory doth inherit 80
 From ruin of divinest things,
 Feelings that lure thee to betray,
 And light of thoughts that pass away.
- For thou hast earned a mighty boon,
 The truths which wisest poets see 85
Dimly, thy mind may make its own,
 Rewarding its own majesty,
 Entranced in some diviner mood
 Of self-oblivious solitude.
- Custom, and Faith, and Power thou spurnest; 90
 From hate and awe thy heart is free;
Ardent and pure as day thou burnest,
 For dark and cold mortality
 A living light, to cheer it long,
 The watch-fires of the world among. 95

Therefore from nature's inner shrine,
Where gods and fiends in worship bend,
Majestic spirit, be it thine
The flame to seize, the veil to rend,
Where the vast snake Eternity
In charmed sleep doth ever lie. 100

All that inspires thy voice of love,
Or speaks in thy unclosing eyes,
Or through thy frame doth burn or move,
Or think or feel, awake, arise! 105
Spirit, leave for mine and me
Earth's unsubstantial mimicry!

It ceased, and from the mute and moveless frame
A radiant spirit arose,
All beautiful in naked purity. 110
Robed in its human hues it did ascend,
Disparting as it went the silver clouds
It moved towards the car, and took its seat
Beside the Dæmon shape.

Obedient to the sweep of aery song, 115
The mighty ministers
Unfurled their prismatic wings.
The magic car moved on;
The night was fair, innumerable stars
Studded heaven's dark blue vault; 120
The eastern wave grew pale
With the first smile of morn.

The magic car moved on.
From the swift sweep of wings
The atmosphere in flaming sparkles flew; 125
And where the burning wheels
Eddied above the mountain's loftiest peak
Was traced a line of lightning.
Now far above a rock the utmost verge
Of the wide earth it flew, 130
The rival of the Andes, whose dark brow
Frowned o'er the silver sea.

- Far, far below the chariot's stormy path,
Calm as a slumbering babe,
Tremendous ocean lay. 135
- Its broad and silent mirror gave to view
The pale and waning stars,
The chariot's fiery track,
And the grey light of morn
Tinging those fleecy clouds 140
- That cradled in their folds the infant dawn.
The chariot seemed to fly
Through the abyss of an immense concave,
Radiant with million constellations, tinged
With shades of infinite colour, 145
And semicircled with a belt
Flashing incessant meteors.
- As they approached their goal,
The wingèd shadows seemed to gather speed.
The sea no longer was distinguished; earth 150
Appeared a vast and shadowy sphere, suspended
In the black concave of heaven
With the sun's cloudless orb,
Whose rays of rapid light
Parted around the chariot's swifter course, 155
And fell like ocean's feathery spray
Dashed from the boiling surge
Before a vessel's prow.
- The magic car moved on.
Earth's distant orb appeared 160
The smallest light that twinkles in the heavens,
Whilst round the chariot's way
Innumerable systems widely rolled,
And countless spheres diffused
An ever varying glory. 165
- It was a sight of wonder! Some were horned,
And, like the moon's argentine crescent hung
In the dark dome of heaven, some did shed
A clear mild beam like Hesperus, while the sea
Yet glows with fading sun-light; others dashed 170

Athwart the night with trains of bickering fire,
Like spherèd worlds to death and ruin driven;
Some shone like stars, and as the chariot passed
Bedimmed all other light.

Spirit of Nature! here 175
In this interminable wilderness
Of worlds, at whose involved immensity
Even soaring fancy staggers,
Here is thy fitting temple.
Yet not the lightest leaf 180
That quivers to the passing breeze
Is less instinct with thee,—
Yet not the meanest worm,
That lurks in graves and fattens on the dead
Less shares thy eternal breath. 185
Spirit of Nature! thou
Imperishable as this glorious scene,
Here is thy fitting temple.

If solitude hath ever led thy steps
To the shore of the immeasurable sea, 190
And thou hast lingered there
Until the sun's broad orb
Seemed resting on the fiery line of ocean,
Thou must have marked the braided webs of gold
That without motion hang 195
Over the sinking sphere:
Thou must have marked the billowy mountain clouds,
Edged with intolerable radiancy,
Towering like rocks of jet
Above the burning deep: 200
And yet there is a moment
When the sun's highest point
Peers like a star o'er ocean's western edge,
When those far clouds of feathery purple gleam
Like fairy lands girt by some heavenly sea: 205
Then has thy rapt imagination soared
Where in the midst of all existing things
The temple of the mightiest Dæmon stands.

Yet not the golden islands
 That gleam amid yon flood of purple light, 210
 Nor the feathery curtains
 That canopy the sun's resplendent couch,
 Nor the burnished ocean waves
 Paving that gorgeous dome,
 So fair, so wonderful a sight 215
 As the eternal temple could afford.
 The elements of all that human thought
 Can frame of lovely or sublime, did join
 To rear the fabric of the fane, nor aught
 Of earth may image forth its majesty. 220
 Yet likest evening's vault that faëry hall,
 As heaven low resting on the wave it spread
 Its floors of flashing light,
 Its vast and azure dome;
 And on the verge of that obscure abyss 225
 Where crystal battlements o'erhang the gulph
 Of the dark world, ten thousand spheres diffuse
 Their lustre through its adamantine gates.

The magic car no longer moved;
 The Dæmon and the Spirit 230
 Entered the eternal gates.
 Those clouds of aery gold
 That slept in glittering billows
 Beneath the azure canopy,
 With the etherial footsteps trembled not; 235
 While slight and odorous mists
 Floated to strains of thrilling melody
 Through the vast columns and the pearly shrines.

The Dæmon and the Spirit
 Approached the overhanging battlement. 240
 Below lay stretched the boundless universe!
 There, far as the remotest line
 That limits swift imagination's flight,
 Unending orbs mingled in mazy motion,
 Immutably fulfilling 245
 Eternal Nature's law.

Above, below, around,
 The circling systems formed
 A wilderness of harmony,
 Each with undeviating aim
 In eloquent silence through the depths of space
 Pursued its wondrous way.— 250

Awhile the Spirit paused in ecstasy.
 Yet soon she saw, as the vast spheres swept by,
 Strange things within their belted orbs appear. 255
 Like animated frenzies, dimly moved
 Shadows, and skeletons, and fiendly shapes,
 Thronging round human graves, and o'er the dead
 Sculpturing records for each memory
 In verse, such as malignant gods pronounce, 260
 Blasting the hopes of men, when heaven and hell
 Confounded burst in ruin o'er the world:
 And they did build vast trophies, instruments
 Of murder, human bones, barbaric gold,
 Skins torn from living men, and towers of skulls 265
 With sightless holes gazing on blinder heaven,
 Mitres, and crowns, and brazen chariots stained
 With blood, and scrolls of mystic wickedness,
 The sanguine codes of venerable crime.
 The likeness of a thronèd king came by, 270
 When these had past, bearing upon his brow
 A threefold crown; his countenance was calm,
 His eye severe and cold; but his right hand
 Was charged with bloody coin, and he did gnaw
 By fits, with secret smiles, a human heart 275
 Concealed beneath his robe; and motley shapes,
 A multitudinous throng, around him knelt,
 With bosoms bare, and bowed heads, and false looks
 Of true submission, as the sphere rolled by,
 Brooking no eye to witness their foul shame, 280
 Which human hearts must feel, while human tongues
 Tremble to speak, they did rage horribly,
 Breathing in self contempt fierce blasphemies
 Against the Dæmon of the World, and high
 Hurling their armèd hands where the pure Spirit, 285

Serene and inaccessibly secure,
 Stood on an isolated pinnacle,
 The flood of ages combating below
 The depth of the unbounded universe
 Above, and all around
 Necessity's unchanging harmony.

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THE DÆMON OF THE WORLD.

PART II.

O HAPPY Earth! reality of Heaven!
 To which those restless powers that ceaselessly
 Throng through the human universe, aspire;
 Thou consummation of all mortal hope!
 Thou glorious prize of blindly-working will! 5
 Whose rays, diffused throughout all space and time,
 Verge to one point and blend forever there:
 Of purest spirits thou pure dwelling-place!
 Where care and sorrow, impotence and crime,
 Languor, disease, and ignorance dare not come: 10
 O happy Earth, reality of Heaven!

Genius has seen thee in her passionate dreams,
 And dim forebodings of thy loveliness
 Haunting the human heart, have there entwined
 Those rooted hopes, that the proud Power of Evil 15
 Shall not forever on this fairest world
 Shake pestilence and war, or that his slaves
 With blasphemy for prayer, and human blood
 For sacrifice, before his shrine forever
 In adoration bend, or Erebus 20
 With all its banded fiends shall not uprise
 To overwhelm in envy and revenge
 The dauntless and the good, who dare to hurl
 Defiance at his throne, girt tho' it be

With Death's omnipotence. Thou hast beheld 25
 His empire, o'er the present and the past;
 It was a desolate sight—now gaze on mine,
 Futurity. Thou hoary giant Time,
 Render thou up thy half-devoured babes,—
 And from the cradles of eternity, 30
 Where millions lie lulled to their portioned sleep
 By the deep murmuring stream of passing things,
 Tear thou that gloomy shroud.—Spirit, behold
 Thy glorious destiny!

The Spirit saw

The vast frame of the renovated world 35
 Smile in the lap of Chaos, and the sense
 Of hope thro' her fine texture did suffuse
 Such varying glow, as summer evening casts
 On undulating clouds and deepening lakes.
 Like the vague sighings of a wind at even, 40
 That wakes the wavelets of the slumbering sea
 And dies on the creation of its breath,
 And sinks and rises, fails and swells by fits:
 Was the sweet stream of thought that with wild motion
 Flowed o'er the Spirit's human sympathies. 45
 The mighty tide of thought had paused awhile,
 Which from the Dæmon now like Ocean's stream
 Again began to pour.—

To me is given

The wonders of the human world to keep—
 Space, matter, time and mind—let the sight 50
 Renew and strengthen all thy failing hope.
 All things are recreated, and the flame
 Of consentaneous love inspires all life:
 The fertile bosom of the earth gives suck
 To myriads, who still grow beneath her care, 55
 Rewarding her with their pure perfectness:
 The balmy breathings of the wind inhale
 Her virtues, and diffuse them all abroad:
 Health floats amid the gentle atmosphere,
 Glows in the fruits, and mantles on the stream: 60
 No storms deform the beaming brow of heaven,

Nor scatter in the freshness of its pride
The foliage of the undecaying trees ;
But fruits are ever ripe, flowers ever fair,
And Autumn proudly bears her matron grace, 65
Kindling a flush on the fair cheek of Spring,
Whose virgin bloom beneath the ruddy fruit
Reflects its tint and blushes into love.

The habitable earth is full of bliss ;
Those wastes of frozen billows that were hurled 70
By everlasting snow-storms round the poles,
Where matter dared nor vegetate nor live,
But ceaseless frost round the vast solitude
Bound its broad zone of stillness, are unloosed ;
And fragrant zephyrs there from spicy isles 75
Ruffle the placid ocean-deep, that rolls
Its broad, bright surges to the sloping sand,
Whose roar is wakened into echoings sweet
To murmur through the heaven-breathing groves
And melodize with man's blest nature there. 80

The vast tract of the parched and sandy waste
Now teems with countless rills and shady woods,
Corn-fields and pastures and white cottages ;
And where the startled wilderness did hear
A savage conqueror stained in kindred blood, 85
Hymning his victory, or the milder snake
Crushing the bones of some frail antelope
Within his brazen folds—the dewy lawn,
Offering sweet incense to the sun-rise, smiles
To see a babe before his mother's door, 90
Share with the green and golden basilisk
That comes to lick his feet, his morning's meal.

Those trackless deeps, where many a weary sail
Has seen above the illimitable plain,
Morning on night, and night on morning rise, 95
Whilst still no land to greet the wanderer spread
Its shadowy mountains on the sun-bright sea,

Where the loud roarings of the tempest-waves
So long have mingled with the gusty wind
In melancholy loneliness, and swept 100
The desert of those ocean solitudes,
But vocal to the sea-bird's harrowing shriek,
The bellowing monster, and the rushing storm,
Now to the sweet and many-mingling sounds
Of kindest human impulses respond: 105
Those lonely realms bright garden-isles begem,
With lightsome clouds and shining seas between,
And fertile vallies, resonant with bliss,
Whilst green woods overcanopy the wave,
Which like a toil-worn labourer leaps to shore, 110
To meet the kisses of the flowrets there.

Man chief perceives the change, his being notes
The gradual renovation, and defines
Each movement of its progress on his mind.
Man, where the gloom of the long polar night 115
Lowered o'er the snow-clad rocks and frozen soil,
Where scarce the hardest herb that braves the frost
Basked in the moonlight's ineffectual glow,
Shrank with the plants, and darkened with the night;
Nor where the tropics bound the realms of day 120
With a broad belt of mingling cloud and flame,
Where blue mists through the unmoving atmosphere
Scattered the seeds of pestilence, and fed
Unnatural vegetation, where the land
Teemed with all earthquake, tempest and disease, 125
Was man a nobler being; slavery
Had crushed him to his country's bloodstained dust.

Even where the milder zone afforded man
A seeming shelter, yet contagion there,
Blighting his being with unnumbered ills, 130
Spread like a quenchless fire; nor truth availed
Till late to arrest its progress, or create
That peace which first in bloodless victory waved
Her snowy standard o'er this favoured clime:
There man was long the train-bearer of slaves, 135

The mimic of surrounding misery,
The jackal of ambition's lion-rage,
The bloodhound of religion's hungry zeal.

Here now the human being stands adorning
This loveliest earth with taintless body and mind; 140
Blest from his birth with all bland impulses,
Which gently in his noble bosom wake
All kindly passions and all pure desires.
Him, still from hope to hope the bliss pursuing,
Which from the exhaustless lore of human weal 145
Draws on the virtuous mind, the thoughts that rise
In time-destroying infiniteness, gift
With self-enshrined eternity, that mocks
The unprevailing hoariness of age,
And man, once fleeting o'er the transient scene 150
Swift as an unremembered vision, stands
Immortal upon earth: no longer now
He slays the beast that sports around his dwelling
And horribly devours its mangled flesh,
Or drinks its vital blood, which like a stream 155
Of poison thro' his fevered veins did flow
Feeding a plague that secretly consumed
His feeble frame, and kindling in his mind
Hatred, despair, and fear and vain belief,
The germs of misery, death, disease, and crime. 160
No longer now the wingèd habitants,
That in the woods their sweet lives sing away,
Flee from the form of man; but gather round,
And prune their sunny feathers on the hands
Which little children stretch in friendly sport 165
Towards these dreadless partners of their play.
All things are void of terror: man has lost
His desolating privilege, and stands
An equal amidst equals: happiness
And science dawn though late upon the earth; 170
Peace cheers the mind, health renovates the frame;
Disease and pleasure cease to mingle here,
Reason and passion cease to combat there;
Whilst mind unfettered o'er the earth extends

Its all-subduing energies, and wields 175
The sceptre of a vast dominion there.

Mild is the slow necessity of death:
The tranquil spirit fails beneath its grasp,
Without a groan, almost without a fear,
Resigned in peace to the necessity, 180
Calm as a voyager to some distant land,
And full of wonder, full of hope as he.
The deadly germs of languor and disease
Waste in the human frame, and Nature gifts
With choicest boons her human worshippers. 185
How vigorous now the athletic form of age!
How clear its open and unwrinkled brow!
Where neither avarice, cunning, pride, or care,
Had stamped the seal of grey deformity
On all the mingling lineaments of time. 190
How lovely the intrepid front of youth!
How sweet the smiles of taintless infancy.

Within the massy prison's mouldering courts,
Fearless and free the ruddy children play,
Weaving gay chaplets for their innocent brows 195
With the green ivy and the red wall-flower,
That mock the dungeon's unavailing gloom;
The ponderous chains, and gratings of strong iron,
There rust amid the accumulated ruins
Now mingling slowly with their native earth: 200
There the broad beam of day, which feebly once
Lighted the cheek of lean captivity
With a pale and sickly glare, now freely shines
On the pure smiles of infant playfulness:
No more the shuddering voice of hoarse despair 205
Peals through the echoing vaults, but soothing notes
Of ivy-fingered winds and gladsome birds
And merriment are resonant around.

The fanes of Fear and Falsehood hear no more
The voice that once waked multitudes to war 210
Thundering thro' all their aisles: but now respond

To the death dirge of the melancholy wind:
 It were a sight of awfulness to see
 The works of faith and slavery, so vast,
 So sumptuous, yet withal so perishing! 215
 Even as the corpse that rests beneath their wall.
 A thousand mourners deck the pomp of death
 To-day, the breathing marble glows above
 To decorate its memory, and tongues
 Are busy of its life: to-morrow, worms 220
 In silence and in darkness seize their prey.
 These ruins soon leave not a wreck behind:
 Their elements, wide scattered o'er the globe,
 To happier shapes are moulded, and become
 Ministrant to all blissful impulses: 225
 Thus human things are perfected, and earth,
 Even as a child beneath its mother's love,
 Is strengthened in all excellence, and grows
 Fairer and nobler with each passing year.

Now Time his dusky pennons o'er the scene 230
 Closes in steadfast darkness, and the past
 Fades from our charmed sight. My task is done:
 Thy lore is learned. Earth's wonders are thine own,
 With all the fear and all the hope they bring.
 My spells are past: the present now recurs. 235
 Ah me! a pathless wilderness remains
 Yet unsubdued by man's reclaiming hand.

Yet, human Spirit, bravely hold thy course,
 Let virtue teach thee firmly to pursue
 The gradual paths of an aspiring change: 240
 For birth and life and death, and that strange state
 Before the naked powers that thro' the world
 Wander like winds have found a human home,
 All tend to perfect happiness, and urge
 The restless wheels of being on their way, 245
 Whose flashing spokes, instinct with infinite life,
 Bicker and burn to gain their destined goal:
 For birth but wakes the universal mind
 Whose mighty streams might else in silence flow

Thro' the vast world, to individual sense 250
Of outward shews, whose unexperienced shape
New modes of passion to its frame may lend;
Life is its state of action, and the store
Of all events is aggregated there
That variegate the eternal universe; 255
Death is a gate of dreariness and gloom,
That leads to azure isles and beaming skies
And happy regions of eternal hope.
Therefore, O Spirit! fearlessly bear on: 259
Though storms may break the primrose on its stalk,
Though frosts may blight the freshness of its bloom,
Yet spring's awakening breath will woo the earth,
To feed with kindest dews its favorite flower,
That blooms in mossy banks and darksome glens,
Lighting the green wood with its sunny smile. 265

Fear not then, Spirit, death's disrobing hand,
So welcome when the tyrant is awake,
So welcome when the bigot's hell-torch flares;
'Tis but the voyage of a darksome hour,
The transient gulph-dream of a startling sleep. 270
For what thou art shall perish utterly,
But what is thine may never cease to be;
Death is no foe to virtue: earth has seen
Love's brightest roses on the scaffold bloom,
Mingling with freedom's fadeless laurels there, 275
And presaging the truth of visioned bliss.
Are there not hopes within thee, which this scene
Of linked and gradual being has confirmed?
Hopes that not vainly thou, and living fires
Of mind, as radiant and as pure as thou 280
Have shone upon the paths of men—return
Surpassing Spirit, to that world, where thou
Art destined an eternal war to wage
With tyranny and falsehood, and uproot
The germs of misery from the human heart. 285
Thine is the hand whose piety would soothe
The thorny pillow of unhappy crime,
Whose impotence an easy pardon gains,

Watching its wanderings as a friend's disease:
 Thine is the brow whose mildness would defy 290
 Its fiercest rage, and brave its sternest will,
 When fenced by power and master of the world.
 Thou art sincere and good; of resolute mind,
 Free from heart-withering custom's cold control,
 Of passion lofty, pure and unsubdued. 295
 Earth's pride and meanness could not vanquish thee,
 And therefore art thou worthy of the boon
 Which thou hast now received: virtue shall keep
 Thy footsteps in the path that thou hast trod,
 And many days of beaming hope shall bless 300
 Thy spotless life of sweet and sacred love.
 Go, happy one, and give that bosom joy
 Whose sleepless spirit waits to catch
 Light, life and rapture from thy smile.

The Dæmon called its wingèd ministers. 305
 Speechless with bliss the Spirit mounts the car,
 That rolled beside the crystal battlement,
 Bending her beamy eyes in thankfulness.
 The burning wheels inflame
 The steep descent of Heaven's untrodden way. 310
 Fast and far the chariot flew:
 The mighty globes that rolled
 Around the gate of the Eternal Fane
 Lessened by slow degrees, and soon appeared
 Such tiny twinklers as the planet orbs 315
 That ministering on the solar power
 With borrowed light pursued their narrower way.
 Earth floated then below:
 The chariot paused a moment;
 The Spirit then descended: 320
 And from the earth departing
 The shadows with swift wings
 Speeded like thought upon the light of Heaven.

The Body and the Soul united then,
 A gentle start convulsed Ianthé's frame: 325
 Her veiny eyelids quietly unclosed;

Moveless awhile the dark blue orbs remained:
 She looked around in wonder and beheld
 Henry, who kneeled in silence by her couch,
 Watching her sleep with looks of speechless love, 330
 And the bright beaming stars
 That through the casement shone.

MONT BLANC.

LINES WRITTEN IN THE VALE OF CHAMOUNI.

I.

THE everlasting universe of things
 Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves,
 Now dark—now glittering—now reflecting gloom—
 Now lending splendour, where from secret springs
 The source of human thought its tribute brings 5
 Of waters,—with a sound but half its own,
 Such as a feeble brook will oft assume
 In the wild woods, among the mountains lone,
 Where waterfalls around it leap for ever,
 Where woods and winds contend, and a vast river 10
 Over its rocks ceaselessly bursts and raves.

II.

Thus thou, Ravine of Arve—dark, deep Ravine—
 Thou many-coloured, many-voiced vale,
 Over whose pines, and crags, and caverns sail
 Fast cloud shadows and sunbeams: awful scene, 15
 Where Power in likeness of the Arve comes down
 From the ice gulphs that gird his secret throne,
 Bursting through these dark mountains like the flame
 Of lightning thro' the tempest;—thou dost lie,
 Thy giant brood of pines around thee clinging, 20
 Children of elder time, in whose devotion
 The chainless winds still come and ever came
 To drink their odours, and their mighty swinging
 To hear—an old and solemn harmony;
 Thine earthly rainbows stretched across the sweep 25

Of the ætherial waterfall, whose veil
 Robes some unsculptured image; the strange sleep
 Which when the voices of the desert fail
 Wraps all in its own deep eternity;—
 Thy caverns echoing to the Arve's commotion, 30
 A loud, lone sound no other sound can tame;
 Thou art pervaded with that ceaseless motion,
 Thou art the path of that unresting sound—
 Dizzy Ravine! and when I gaze on thee
 I seem as in a trance sublime and strange 35
 To muse on my own separate phantasy,
 My own, my human mind, which passively
 Now renders and receives fast influencings,
 Holding an unrenitting interchange
 With the clear universe of things around; 40
 One legion of wild thoughts, whose wandering wings
 Now float above thy darkness, and now rest
 Where that or thou art no unbidden guest,
 In the still cave of the witch Poesy,
 Seeking among the shadows that pass by 45
 Ghosts of all things that are, some shade of thee,
 Some phantom, some faint image; till the breast
 From which they fled recalls them, thou art there!

III.

Some say that gleams of a remoter world
 Visit the soul in sleep,—that death is slumber, 50
 And that its shapes the busy thoughts outnumber
 Of those who wake and live.—I look on high;
 Has some unknown omnipotence unfurled
 The veil of life and death? or do I lie
 In dream, and does the mightier world of sleep 55
 Spread far around and inaccessible
 Its circles? For the very spirit fails,
 Driven like a homeless cloud from steep to steep
 That vanishes among the viewless gales!
 Far, far above, piercing the infinite sky, 60
 Mont Blanc appears,—still, snowy, and serene—
 Its subject mountains their unearthly forms
 Pile around it, ice and rock; broad vales between

Of frozen floods, unfathomable deeps,
 Blue as the overhanging heaven, that spread 65
 And wind among the accumulated steeps;
 A desert peopled by the storms alone,
 Save when the eagle brings some hunter's bone,
 And the wolf tracks her there—how hideously
 Its shapes are heaped around! rude, bare, and high, 70
 Ghastly, and scarred, and riven.—Is this the scene
 Where the old Earthquake-dæmon taught her young
 Ruin? Were these their toys? or did a sea
 Of fire, envelope once this silent snow?
 None can reply—all seems eternal now. 75
 The wilderness has a mysterious tongue
 Which teaches awful doubt, or faith so mild,
 So solemn, so serene, that man may be
 But for such faith with nature reconciled;
 Thou hast a voice, great Mountain, to repeal 80
 Large codes of fraud and woe; not understood
 By all, but which the wise, and great, and good
 Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel.

IV.

The fields, the lakes, the forests, and the streams,
 Ocean, and all the living things that dwell 85
 Within the dædal earth; lightning, and rain,
 Earthquake, and fiery flood, and hurricane,
 The torpor of the year when feeble dreams
 Visit the hidden buds, or dreamless sleep
 Holds every future leaf and flower;—the bound 90
 With which from that detested trance they leap;
 The works and ways of man, their death and birth,
 And that of him and all that his may be;
 All things that move and breathe with toil and sound
 Are born and die; revolve, subside and swell. 95
 Power dwells apart in its tranquillity
 Remote, serene, and inaccessible:
 And *this*, the naked countenance of earth,
 On which I gaze, even these primæval mountains
 Teach the adverting mind. The glaciers creep 100
 Like snakes that watch their prey, from their far fountains,

Slow rolling on; there, many a precipice,
 Frost and the Sun in scorn of mortal power
 Have piled: dome, pyramid, and pinnacle,
 A city of death, distinct with many a tower 105
 And wall impregnable of beaming ice.
 Yet not a city, but a flood of ruin
 Is there, that from the boundaries of the sky
 Rolls its perpetual stream; vast pines are strewing
 Its destined path, or in the mangled soil 110
 Branchless and shattered stand; the rocks, drawn down
 From yon remotest waste, have overthrown
 The limits of the dead and living world,
 Never to be reclaimed. The dwelling-place
 Of insects, beasts, and birds, becomes its spoil; 115
 Their food and their retreat for ever gone,
 So much of life and joy is lost. The race
 Of man, flies far in dread; his work and dwelling
 Vanish, like smoke before the tempest's stream,
 And their place is not known. Below, vast caves 120
 Shine in the rushing torrent's restless gleam,
 Which from those secret chasms in tumult welling
 Meet in the vale, and one majestic River,
 The breath and blood of distant lands, for ever
 Rolls its loud waters to the ocean waves, 125
 Breathes its swift vapours to the circling air.

V.

Mont Blanc yet gleams on high:—the power is there,
 The still and solemn power of many sights,
 And many sounds, and much of life and death.
 In the calm darkness of the moonless nights, 130
 In the lone glare of day, the snows descend
 Upon that Mountain; none beholds them there,
 Nor when the flakes burn in the sinking sun,
 Or the star-beams dart through them:—Winds contend
 Silently there, and heap the snow with breath 135
 Rapid and strong, but silently! Its home
 The voiceless lightning in these solitudes
 Keeps innocently, and like vapour broods
 Over the snow. The secret strength of things

Which governs thought, and to the infinite dome 140
 Of heaven is as a law, inhabits thee!
 And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,
 If to the human mind's imaginings
 Silence and solitude were vacancy?

July 23, 1816.

CANCELLED PASSAGE OF MONT BLANC.

There is a voice, not understood by all,
 Sent from these desert-caves. It is the roar
 Of the rent ice-cliff which the sunbeams call,
 Plunging into the vale—it is the blast
 Descending on the pines—the torrents pour. . . .

Laon and Cythna;

OR, THE REVOLUTION OF THE GOLDEN CITY:

A Vision of the Nineteenth Century.

IN THE STANZA OF SPENSER.

[Usually known as *The Revolt of Islam*.]

ΔΟΣ ΠΟΥ ΣΤΩ ΚΑΙ ΚΟΣΜΟΝ ΚΙΝΗΣΩ.

ARCHIMEDES.



P R E F A C E.

THE Poem which I now present to the world, is an attempt from which I scarcely dare to expect success, and in which a writer of established fame might fail without disgrace. It is an experiment on the temper of the public mind, as to how far a thirst for a happier condition of moral and political society survives, among the enlightened and refined, the tempests which have shaken the age in which we live. I have sought to enlist the harmony of metrical language, the ætherial combinations of the fancy, the rapid and subtle transitions of human passion, all those elements which essentially compose a Poem, in the cause of a liberal and comprehensive morality, and in the view of kindling within the bosoms of my readers, a virtuous enthusiasm for those doctrines of liberty and justice, that faith and hope in something good, which neither violence,

nor misrepresentation, nor prejudice, can ever totally extinguish among mankind.

For this purpose I have chosen a story of human passion in its most universal character, diversified with moving and romantic adventures, and appealing, in contempt of all artificial opinions or institutions, to the common sympathies of every human breast. I have made no attempt to recommend the motives which I would substitute for those at present governing mankind by methodical and systematic argument. I would only awaken the feelings, so that the reader should see the beauty of true virtue, and be incited to those enquiries which have led to my moral and political creed, and that of some of the sublimest intellects in the world. The Poem therefore, (with the exception of the first Canto, which is purely introductory), is narrative, not didactic. It is a succession of pictures illustrating the growth and progress of individual mind aspiring after excellence, and devoted to the love of mankind; its influence in refining and making pure the most daring and uncommon impulses of the imagination, the understanding, and the senses; its impatience at "all the oppressions which are done under the sun;" its tendency to awaken public hope and to enlighten and improve mankind; the rapid effects of the application of that tendency; the awakening of an immense nation from their slavery and degradation to a true sense of moral dignity and freedom; the bloodless dethronement of their oppressors, and the unveiling of the religious frauds by which they had been deluded into submission; the tranquillity of successful patriotism, and the universal toleration and benevolence of true philanthropy; the treachery and barbarity of hired soldiers; vice not the object of punishment and hatred, but kindness and pity; the faithlessness of tyrants; the confederacy of the Rulers of the World, and the restoration of the expelled Dynasty by foreign arms; the massacre and extermination of the Patriots, and the victory of established power; the consequences of legitimate despotism, civil war, famine, plague, superstition, and an utter extinction of the domestic affections; the judicial murder of the advocates of Liberty; the temporary triumph of oppression, that secure

earnest of its final and inevitable fall; the transient nature of ignorance and error, and the eternity of genius and virtue. Such is the series of delineations of which the Poem consists. And if the lofty passions with which it has been my scope to distinguish this story, shall not excite in the reader a generous impulse, an ardent thirst for excellence, an interest profound and strong, such as belongs to no meaner desires—let not the failure be imputed to a natural unfitness for human sympathy in these sublime and animating themes. It is the business of the Poet to communicate to others the pleasure and the enthusiasm arising out of those images and feelings, in the vivid presence of which within his own mind, consists at once his inspiration and his reward.

The panic which, like an epidemic transport, seized upon all classes of men during the excesses consequent upon the French Revolution, is gradually giving place to sanity. It has ceased to be believed, that whole generations of mankind ought to consign themselves to a hopeless inheritance of ignorance and misery, because a nation of men who had been dupes and slaves for centuries, were incapable of conducting themselves with the wisdom and tranquillity of freemen so soon as some of their fetters were partially loosened. That their conduct could not have been marked by any other characters than ferocity and thoughtlessness, is the historical fact from which liberty derives all its recommendations, and falsehood the worst features of its deformity. There is a reflux in the tide of human things which bears the shipwrecked hopes of men into a secure haven, after the storms are past. Methinks, those who now live have survived an age of despair.

The French Revolution may be considered as one of those manifestations of a general state of feeling among civilized mankind, produced by a defect of correspondence between the knowledge existing in society and the improvement, or gradual abolition of political institutions. The year 1788 may be assumed as the epoch of one of the most important crises produced by this feeling. The sympathies connected with that event extended to every bosom. The most generous and amiable natures were those which

participated the most extensively in these sympathies. But such a degree of unmingled good was expected, as it was impossible to realize. If the Revolution had been in every respect prosperous, then misrule and superstition would lose half their claims to our abhorrence, as fetters which the captive can unlock with the slightest motion of his fingers, and which do not eat with poisonous rust into the soul. The revulsion occasioned by the atrocities of the demagogues and the re-establishment of successive tyrannies in France was terrible, and felt in the remotest corner of the civilized world. Could they listen to the plea of reason who had groaned under the calamities of a social state, according to the provisions of which, one man riots in luxury whilst another famishes for want of bread? Can he who the day before was a trampled slave, suddenly become liberal-minded, forbearing, and independent? This is the consequence of the habits of a state of society to be produced by resolute perseverance and indefatigable hope, and long-suffering and long believing courage, and the systematic efforts of generations of men of intellect and virtue. Such is the lesson which experience teaches now. But on the first reverses of hope in the progress of French liberty, the sanguine eagerness for good overleapt the solution of these questions, and for a time extinguished itself in the unexpectedness of their result. Thus many of the most ardent and tender-hearted of the worshippers of public good, have been morally ruined by what a partial glimpse of the events they deplored, appeared to shew as the melancholy desolation of all their cherished hopes. Hence gloom and misanthropy have become the characteristics of the age in which we live, the solace of a disappointment that unconsciously finds relief only in the wilful exaggeration of its own despair. This influence has tainted the literature of the age with the hopelessness of the minds from which it flows. Metaphysics,¹ and enquiries into moral and political science, have become little else than vain attempts to revive exploded superstitions, or sophisms like those² of Mr. Malthus,

¹ I ought to except Sir W. Drummond's "Academical Questions;" a volume of very acute and powerful metaphysical criticism.

² It is remarkable, as a symptom of the revival of public hope, that Mr.

calculated to lull the oppressors of mankind into a security of everlasting triumph. Our works of fiction and poetry have been overshadowed by the same infectious gloom. But mankind appear to me to be emerging from their trance. I am aware, methinks, of a slow, gradual, silent change. In that belief I have composed the following Poem.

I do not presume to enter into competition with our greatest contemporary Poets. Yet I am unwilling to tread in the footsteps of any who have preceded me. I have sought to avoid the imitation of any style of language or versification peculiar to the original minds of which it is the character, designing that even if what I have produced be worthless, it should still be properly my own. Nor have I permitted any system relating to mere words, to divert the attention of the reader from whatever interest I may have succeeded in creating, to my own ingenuity in contriving to disgust them according to the rules of criticism. I have simply clothed my thoughts in what appeared to me the most obvious and appropriate language. A person familiar with nature, and with the most celebrated productions of the human mind, can scarcely err in following the instinct, with respect to selection of language, produced by that familiarity.

There is an education peculiarly fitted for a Poet, without which, genius and sensibility can hardly fill the circle of their capacities. No education indeed can entitle to this appellation a dull and unobservant mind, or one, though neither dull nor unobservant, in which the channels of communication between thought and expression have been obstructed or closed. How far it is my fortune to belong to either of the latter classes, I cannot know. I aspire to be something better. The circumstances of my accidental education have been favourable to this ambition. I have been familiar from boyhood with mountains and lakes, and the sea, and the solitude of forests :

Malthus has assigned, in the later editions of his work, an indefinite dominion to moral restraint over the principle of population. This concession answers all the inferences from his doctrine unfavourable to human improvement, and reduces the "ESSAY ON POPULATION" to a commentary illustrative of the unanswerableness of "POLITICAL JUSTICE."

Danger which sports upon the brink of precipices, has been my playmate. I have trodden the glaciers of the Alps, and lived under the eye of Mont Blanc. I have been a wanderer among distant fields. I have sailed down mighty rivers, and seen the sun rise and set, and the stars come forth, whilst I have sailed night and day down a rapid stream among mountains. I have seen populous cities, and have watched the passions which rise and spread, and sink and change amongst assembled multitudes of men. I have seen the theatre of the more visible ravages of tyranny and war, cities and villages reduced to scattered groups of black and roofless houses, and the naked inhabitants sitting famished upon their desolated thresholds. I have conversed with living men of genius. The poetry of antient Greece and Rome, and modern Italy, and our own country, has been to me like external nature, a passion and an enjoyment. Such are the sources from which the materials for the imagery of my Poem have been drawn. I have considered Poetry in its most comprehensive sense, and have read the Poets and the Historians, and the Metaphysicians¹ whose writings have been accessible to me, and have looked upon the beautiful and majestic scenery of the earth as common sources of those elements which it is the province of the Poet to embody and combine. Yet the experience and the feelings to which I refer, do not in themselves constitute men Poets, but only prepare them to be the auditors of those who are. How far I shall be found to possess that more essential attribute of Poetry, the power of awakening in others sensations like those which animate my own bosom, is that which, to speak sincerely, I know not; and which with an acquiescent and contented spirit, I expect to be taught by the effect which I shall produce upon those whom I now address.

I have avoided, as I have said before, the imitation of any contemporary style. But there must be a resemblance which does not depend upon their own will, between all the writers of any particular age. They cannot escape

¹ In this sense there may be such a thing as perfectibility in works of fiction, notwithstanding the concession often made by the advocates of human improvement, that perfectibility is a term applicable only to science.

from subjection to a common influence which arises out of an infinite combination of circumstances belonging to the times in which they live, though each is in a degree the author of the very influence by which his being is thus pervaded. Thus, the tragic Poets of the age of Pericles; the Italian revivers of ancient learning; those mighty intellects of our own country that succeeded the Reformation, the translators of the Bible, Shakspeare, Spenser, the Dramatists of the reign of Elizabeth, and Lord Bacon¹; the colder spirits of the interval that succeeded;—all, resemble each other, and differ from every other in their several classes. In this view of things, Ford can no more be called the imitator of Shakspeare, than Shakspeare the imitator of Ford. There were perhaps few other points of resemblance between these two men, than that which the universal and inevitable influence of their age produced. And this is an influence which neither the meanest scribbler, nor the sublimest genius of any æra can escape; and which I have not attempted to escape.

I have adopted the stanza of Spenser, (a measure inexpressibly beautiful) not because I consider it a finer model of poetical harmony than the blank verse of Shakspeare and Milton, but because in the latter there is no shelter for mediocrity: you must either succeed or fail. This perhaps an aspiring spirit should desire. But I was enticed also, by the brilliancy and magnificence of sound which a mind that has been nourished upon musical thoughts, can produce by a just and harmonious arrangement of the pauses of this measure. Yet there will be found some instances where I have completely failed in this attempt, and one, which I here request the reader to consider as an erratum, where there is left most inadvertently an alexandrine in the middle of a stanza.

But in this, as in every other respect, I have written fearlessly. It is the misfortune of this age, that its Writers, too thoughtless of immortality, are exquisitely sensible to temporary praise or blame. They write with the fear of Reviews before their eyes. This system of criticism sprang

¹ Milton stands alone in the age which he illumined.

up in that torpid interval when Poetry was not. Poetry, and the art which professes to regulate and limit its powers, cannot subsist together. Longinus could not have been the contemporary of Homer, nor Boileau of Horace. Yet this species of criticism never presumed to assert an understanding of its own: it has always, unlike true science, followed, not preceded the opinion of mankind, and would even now bribe with worthless adulation some of our greatest Poets to impose gratuitous fetters on their own imaginations, and become unconscious accomplices in the daily murder of all genius either not so aspiring or not so fortunate as their own. I have sought therefore to write, as I believe that Homer, Shakspeare, and Milton wrote, with an utter disregard of anonymous censure. I am certain that calumny and misrepresentation, though it may move me to compassion, cannot disturb my peace. I shall understand the expressive silence of those sagacious enemies who dare not trust themselves to speak. I shall endeavour to extract from the midst of insult, and contempt, and maledictions, those admonitions which may tend to correct whatever imperfections such censurers may discover in this my first serious appeal to the Public. If certain Critics were as clear-sighted as they are malignant, how great would be the benefit to be derived from their virulent writings! As it is, I fear I shall be malicious enough to be amused with their paltry tricks and lame invectives. Should the Public judge that my composition is worthless, I shall indeed bow before the tribunal from which Milton received his crown of immortality, and shall seek to gather, if I live, strength from that defeat, which may nerve me to some new enterprise of thought which may *not* be worthless. I cannot conceive that Lucretius, when he meditated that poem whose doctrines are yet the basis of our metaphysical knowledge, and whose eloquence has been the wonder of mankind, wrote in awe of such censure as the hired sophists of the impure and superstitious noblemen of Rome might affix to what he should produce. It was at the period when Greece was led captive, and Asia made tributary to the Republic, fast verging itself to slavery and ruin, that a multitude of Syrian captives, bigotted to the

worship of their obscene Ashtaroth, and the unworthy successors of Socrates and Zeno, found there a precarious subsistence by administering, under the name of freedmen, to the vices and vanities of the great. These wretched men were skilled to plead, with a superficial but plausible set of sophisms, in favour of that contempt for virtue which is the portion of slaves, and that faith in portents, the most fatal substitute for benevolence in the imaginations of men, which arising from the enslaved communities of the East, then first began to overwhelm the western nations in its stream. Were these the kind of men whose disapprobation the wise and lofty-minded Lucretius should have regarded with a salutary awe? The latest and perhaps the meanest of those who follow in his footsteps, would disdain to hold life on such conditions.

The Poem now presented to the Public occupied little more than six months in the composition. That period has been devoted to the task with unremitting ardour and enthusiasm. I have exercised a watchful and earnest criticism on my work as it grew under my hands. I would willingly have sent it forth to the world with that perfection which long labour and revision is said to bestow. But I found that if I should gain something in exactness by this method, I might lose much of the newness and energy of imagery and language as it flowed fresh from my mind. And although the mere composition occupied no more than six months, the thoughts thus arranged were slowly gathered in as many years.

I trust that the reader will carefully distinguish between those opinions which have a dramatic propriety in reference to the characters which they are designed to elucidate, and such as are properly my own. The erroneous and degrading idea which men have conceived of a Supreme Being, for instance, is spoken against, but not the Supreme Being itself. The belief which some superstitious persons whom I have brought upon the stage, entertain of the Deity, as injurious to the character of his benevolence, is widely different from my own. In recommending also a great and important change in the spirit which animates the social institutions of mankind, I have avoided all flattery to those

violent and malignant passions of our nature, which are ever on the watch to mingle with and to alloy the most beneficial innovations. There is no quarter given to Revenge, or Envy, or Prejudice. Love is celebrated every where as the sole law which should govern the moral world.

In the personal conduct of my Hero and Heroine, there is one circumstance which was intended to startle the reader from the trance of ordinary life. It was my object to break through the crust of those outworn opinions on which established institutions depend. I have appealed therefore to the most universal of all feelings, and have endeavoured to strengthen the moral sense, by forbidding it to waste its energies in seeking to avoid actions which are only crimes of convention. It is because there is so great a multitude of artificial vices, that there are so few real virtues. Those feelings alone which are benevolent or malevolent, are essentially good or bad. The circumstance of which I speak, was introduced, however, merely to accustom men to that charity and toleration which the exhibition of a practice widely differing from their own, has a tendency to promote.¹ Nothing indeed can be more mischievous, than many actions innocent in themselves, which might bring down upon individuals the bigotted contempt and rage of the multitude. .

¹ The sentiments connected with and characteristic of this circumstance have no personal reference to the Writer.

DEDICATION.

TO MARY [WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY].

There is no danger to a man, that knows
What life and death is : there's not any law
Exceeds his knowledge ; neither is it lawful
That he should stoop to any other law.

CHAPMAN.

1.

So now my summer-task is ended, Mary,
And I return to thee, mine own heart's home ;
As to his Queen some victor Knight of Faëry,
Earning bright spoils for her enchanted dome ;
Nor thou disdain, that ere my fame become
A star among the stars of mortal night,
If it indeed may cleave its natal gloom,
Its doubtful promise thus I would unite
With thy belovèd name, thou Child of love and light.

2.

The toil which stole from thee so many an hour,
Is ended,—and the fruit is at thy feet !
No longer where the woods to frame a bower
With interlacèd branches mix and meet,
Or where with sound like many voices sweet,
Water-falls leap among wild islands green,
Which framed for my lone boat a lone retreat
Of moss-grown trees and weeds, shall I be seen :
But beside thee, where still my heart has ever been.

3.

Thoughts of great deeds were mine, dear Friend, when first
 The clouds which wrap this world from youth did pass.
 I do remember well the hour which burst
 My spirit's sleep: a fresh May-dawn it was,
 When I walked forth upon the glittering grass,
 And wept, I knew not why; until there rose
 From the near school-room, voices, that, alas!
 Were but one echo from a world of woes—
 The harsh and grating strife of tyrants and of foes.

4.

And then I clasped my hands and looked around—
 —But none was near to mock my streaming eyes,
 Which poured their warm drops on the sunny ground—
 So without shame, I spake:—"I will be wise,
 And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
 Such power, for I grow weary to behold
 The selfish and the strong still tyrannise
 Without reproach or check." I then controuled
 My tears, my heart grew calm, and I was meek and bold.

5.

And from that hour did I with earnest thought
 Heap knowledge from forbidden mines of lore,
 Yet nothing that my tyrants knew or taught
 I cared to learn, but from that secret store
 Wrought linked armour for my soul, before
 It might walk forth to war among mankind;
 Thus power and hope were strengthened more and more
 Within me, till there came upon my mind
 A sense of loneliness, a thirst with which I pined.

6.

Alas, that love should be a blight and snare
 To those who seek all sympathies in one!—
 Such once I sought in vain; then black despair,
 The shadow of a starless night, was thrown
 Over the world in which I moved alone:—
 Yet never found I one not false to me,
 Hard hearts, and cold, like weights of icy stone
 Which crushed and withered mine, that could not be
 Aught but a lifeless clog, until revived by thee.

7.

Thou Friend, whose presence on my wintry heart
Fell, like bright Spring upon some herbless plain ;
How beautiful and calm and free thou wert
In thy young wisdom, when the mortal chain
Of Custom thou didst burst and rend in twain,
And walked as free as light the clouds among,
Which many an envious slave then breathed in vain
From his dim dungeon, and my spirit sprung
To meet thee from the woes which had begirt it long.

8.

No more alone through the world's wilderness,
Although I trod the paths of high intent,
I journeyed now: no more companionless,
Where solitude is like despair, I went.—
There is the wisdom of a stern content
When Poverty can blight the just and good,
When Infamy dares mock the innocent,
And cherished friends turn with the multitude
To trample: this was ours, and we unshaken stood !

9.

Now has descended a serener hour,
And with inconstant fortune, friends return ;
Tho' suffering leaves the knowledge and the power
Which says:—Let scorn be not repaid with scorn.
And from thy side two gentle babes are born
To fill our home with smiles, and thus are we
Most fortunate beneath life's beaming morn ;
And these delights, and thou, have been to me
The parents of the Song I consecrate to thee.

10.

Is it, that now my inexperienced fingers
But strike the prelude of a loftier strain ?
Or, must the lyre on which my spirit lingers
Soon pause in silence, ne'er to sound again,
Tho' it might shake the Anarch Custom's reign,
And charm the minds of men to Truth's own sway
Holier than was Amphion's? I would fain
Reply in hope—but I am worn away,
And Death and Love are yet contending for their prey.

11.

And what art thou? I know, but dare not speak:
 Time may interpret to his silent years.
 Yet in the paleness of thy thoughtful cheek,
 And in the light thine ample forehead wears,
 And in thy sweetest smiles, and in thy tears,
 And in thy gentle speech, a prophecy
 Is whispered, to subdue my fondest fears:
 And thro' thine eyes, even in thy soul I see
 A lamp of vestal fire burning internally.

12.

They say that thou wert lovely from thy birth,
 Of glorious parents, thou aspiring Child.
 I wonder not—for One then left this earth
 Whose life was like a setting planet mild,
 Which clothed thee in the radiance undefiled
 Of its departing glory; still her fame
 Shines on thee, thro' the tempests dark and wild
 Which shake these latter days; and thou canst claim
 The shelter, from thy Sire, of an immortal name.

13.

One voice came forth from many a mighty spirit,
 Which was the echo of three thousand years;
 And the tumultuous world stood mute to hear it,
 As some lone man who in a desert hears
 The music of his home:—unwonted fears
 Fell on the pale oppressors of our race,
 And Faith, and Custom, and low-thoughted cares,
 Like thunder-stricken dragons, for a space
 Left the torn human heart, their food and dwelling-place.

14.

Truth's deathless voice pauses among mankind!
 If there must be no response to my cry—
 If men must rise and stamp with fury blind
 On his pure name who loves them,—thou and I,
 Sweet friend! can look from our tranquillity
 Like lamps into the world's tempestuous night,—
 Two tranquil stars, while clouds are passing by
 Which wrap them from the foundering seaman's sight,
 That burn from year to year with unextinguished light.

Laon and Cythna.

Οσais δε βροτον εθνος αγλαιαις ἀπτομεσθα,
 Περαινει προς εσχατον
 Πλοον· ναυσι δ' ουτε πεζος ιων αν ευροις
 Εs υπεrβορειων αγωνα θαυματαν οδον.
 PIND. *Pyth.* X.

Canto First.

I.

WHEN the last hope of trampled France had failed
 Like a brief dream of unremaining glory,
 From visions of despair I rose, and scaled
 The peak of an ærial promontory,
 Whose caverned base with the vext surge was hoary;
 And saw the golden dawn break forth, and waken
 Each cloud, and every wave:—but transitory
 The calm: for sudden, the firm earth was shaken,
 As if by the last wreck its frame were overtaken.

II.

So as I stood, one blast of muttering thunder
 Burst in far peals along the waveless deep,
 When, gathering fast, around, above and under,
 Long trains of tremulous mist began to creep,
 Until their complicating lines did steep
 The orient sun in shadow:—not a sound
 Was heard; one horrible repose did keep
 The forests and the floods, and all around
 Darkness more dread than night was poured upon the ground.

III.

Hark! 'tis the rushing of a wind that sweeps
Earth and the ocean. See! the lightnings yawn
Deluging Heaven with fire, and the lashed deeps
Glitter and boil beneath: it rages on,
One mighty stream, whirlwind and waves upthrown,
Lightning, and hail, and darkness eddying by.
There is a pause—the sea-birds, that were gone
Into their caves to shriek, come forth, to spy
What calm has fall'n on earth, what light is in the sky.

IV.

For, where the irresistible storm had cloven
That fearful darkness, the blue sky was seen
Fretted with many a fair cloud interwoven
Most delicately, and the ocean green,
Beneath that opening spot of blue serene,
Quivered like burning emerald: calm was spread
On all below; but far on high, between
Earth and the upper air, the vast clouds fled,
Countless and swift as leaves on autumn's tempest shed.

V.

For ever, as the war became more fierce
Between the whirlwinds and the rack on high,
That spot grew more serene; blue light did pierce
The woof of those white clouds, which seemed to lie
Far, deep, and motionless; while thro' the sky
The pallid semicircle of the moon
Past on, in slow and moving majesty;
Its upper horn arrayed in mists, which soon
But slowly fled, like dew beneath the beams of noon.

VI.

I could not choose but gaze; a fascination
Dwelt in that moon, and sky, and clouds, which drew
My fancy thither, and in expectation
Of what I knew not, I remained:—the hue
Of the white moon, amid that heaven so blue,
Suddenly stained with shadow did appear;
A speck, a cloud, a shape, approaching grew,
Like a great ship in the sun's sinking sphere
Beheld afar at sea, and swift it came anear.

VII.

Even like a bark, which from a chasm of mountains,
Dark, vast, and overhanging, on a river
Which there collects the strength of all its fountains,
Comes forth, whilst with the speed its frame doth quiver,
Sails, oars, and stream, tending to one endeavour;
So, from that chasm of light a wingèd Form
On all the winds of heaven approaching ever
Floated, dilating as it came: the storm
Pursued it with fierce blasts, and lightnings swift and warm.

VIII.

A course precipitous, of dizzy speed,
Suspending thought and breath; a monstrous sight!
For in the air do I behold indeed
An Eagle and a Serpent wreathed in fight:—
And now relaxing its impetuous flight,
Before the aërial rock on which I stood,
The Eagle, hovering, wheeled to left and right,
And hung with lingering wings over the flood,
And startled with its yells the wide air's solitude.

IX.

A shaft of light upon its wings descended,
And every golden feather gleamed therein—
Feather and scale inextricably blended.
The Serpent's mailed and many-coloured skin
Shone thro' the plumes its coils were twined within
By many a swollen and knotted fold, and high
And far, the neck receding lithe and thin,
Sustained a crested head, which warily
Shifted and glanced before the Eagle's stedfast eye.

X.

Around, around, in ceaseless circles wheeling
With clang of wings and scream, the Eagle sailed
Incessantly—sometimes on high concealing
Its lessening orbs, sometimes as if it failed,
Drooped thro' the air; and still it shrieked and wailed
And casting back its eager head, with beak
And talon unremittingly assailed
The wreathèd Serpent, who did ever seek
Upon his enemy's heart a mortal wound to wreak.

XI.

What life, what power, was kindled and arose
Within the sphere of that appalling fray!
For, from the encounter of those wondrous foes,
A vapour like the sea's suspended spray
Hung gathered: in the void air, far away,
Floated the shattered plumes; bright scales did leap,
Where'er the Eagle's talons made their way,
Like sparks into the darkness;—as they sweep,
Blood stains the snowy foam of the tumultuous deep.

XII.

Swift chances in that combat—many a check,
And many a change, a dark and wild turmoil;
Sometimes the Snake around his enemy's neck
Locked in stiff rings his adamantine coil,
Until the Eagle, faint with pain and toil,
Remitted his strong flight, and near the sea
Languidly fluttered, hopeless so to foil
His adversary, who then reared on high
His red and burning crest, radiant with victory.

XIII.

Then on the white edge of the bursting surge,
Where they had sank together, would the Snake
Relax his suffocating grasp, and scourge
The wind with his wild writhings; for to break
That chain of torment, the vast bird would shake
The strength of his unconquerable wings
As in despair, and with his sinewy neck,
Dissolve in sudden shock those linked rings,
Then soar—as swift as smoke from a volcano springs.

XIV.

Wile baffled wile, and strength encountered strength,
Thus long, but unprevailing:—the event
Of that portentous fight appeared at length:
Until the lamp of day was almost spent
It had endured, when lifeless, stark, and rent,
Hung high that mighty Serpent, and at last
Fell to the sea, while o'er the continent,
With clang of wings and scream the Eagle past,
Heavily borne away on the exhausted blast.

XV.

And with it fled the tempest, so that ocean
And earth and sky shone through the atmosphere—
Only, 'twas strange to see the red commotion
Of waves like mountains o'er the sinking sphere
Of sun-set sweep, and their fierce roar to hear
Amid the calm: down the steep path I wound
To the sea-shore—the evening was most clear
And beautiful, and there the sea I found
Calm as a cradled child in dreamless slumber bound.

XVI.

There was a Woman, beautiful as morning,
Sitting beneath the rocks, upon the sand
Of the waste sea—fair as one flower adorning
An icy wilderness—each delicate hand
Lay crossed upon her bosom, and the band
Of her dark hair had fall'n, and so she sate
Looking upon the waves; on the bare strand
Upon the sea-mark a small boat did wait,
Fair as herself, like Love by Hope left desolate.

XVII.

It seemed that this fair Shape had looked upon
That unimaginable fight, and now
That her sweet eyes were weary of the sun,
As brightly it illustrated her woe;
For in the tears which silently to flow
Paused not, its lustre hung: she watching aye
The foam-wreaths which the faint tide wove below
Upon the spangled sands, groaned heavily,
And after every groan looked up over the sea.

XVIII.

And when she saw the wounded Serpent make
His path between the waves, her lips grew pale,
Parted, and quivered; the tears ceased to break
From her immovable eyes; no voice of wail
Escaped her; but she rose, and on the gale
Loosening her star-bright robe and shadowy hair
Poured forth her voice; the caverns of the vale
That opened to the ocean, caught it there,
And filled with silver sounds the overflowing air.

XIX.

She spake in language whose strange melody
Might not belong to earth. I heard, alone,
What made its music more melodious be,
The pity and the love of every tone;
But to the Snake those accents sweet were known
His native tongue and her's; nor did he beat
The hoar spray idly then, but winding on
Thro' the green shadows of the waves that meet
Near to the shore, did pause beside her snowy feet.

XX.

Then on the sands the Woman sate again,
And wept and clasped her hands, and all between,
Renewed the unintelligible strain
Of her melodious voice and eloquent mien;
And she unveiled her bosom, and the green
And glancing shadows of the sea did play
O'er its marmoreal depth:—one moment seen,
For ere the next, the Serpent did obey
Her voice, and, coiled in rest in her embrace it lay.

XXI.

Then she arose, and smiled on me with eyes
Serene yet sorrowing, like that planet fair,
While yet the day-light lingereth in the skies
Which cleaves with arrowy beams the dark-red air,
And said: To grieve is wise, but the despair
Was weak and vain which led thee here from sleep:
This shalt thou know, and more, if thou dost dare
With me and with this Serpent, o'er the deep,
A voyage divine and strange, companionship to keep.

XXII.

Her voice was like the wildest, saddest tone,
Yet sweet, of some loved voice heard long ago.
I wept. Shall this fair woman all alone,
Over the sea with that fierce Serpent go?
His head is on her heart, and who can know
How soon he may devour his feeble prey?—
Such were my thoughts, when the tide 'gan to flow;
And that strange boat, like the moon's shade did sway
Amid reflected stars that in the waters lay.

XXIII.

A boat of rare device, which had no sail
But its own curvèd prow of thin moonstone,
Wrought like a web of texture fine and frail,
To catch those gentlest winds which are not known
To breathe, but by the steady speed alone
With which it cleaves the sparkling sea; and now
We are embarked, the mountains hang and frown
Over the starry deep that gleams below
A vast and dim expanse, as o'er the waves we go.

XXIV.

And as we sailed, a strange and awful tale
That Woman told, like such mysterious dream
As makes the slumberer's cheek with wonder pale!
'Twas midnight, and around, a shoreless stream,
Wide ocean rolled, when that majestic theme
Shrined in her heart found utterance, and she bent
Her looks on mine; those eyes a kindling beam
Of love divine into my spirit sent,
And ere her lips could move, made the air eloquent.

XXV.

Speak not to me, but hear! much shalt thou learn,
Much must remain unthought, and more untold,
In the dark Future's ever-flowing urn:
Know then, that from the depth of ages old,
Two Powers o'er mortal things dominion hold
Ruling the world with a divided lot,
Immortal, all pervading, manifold,
Twin Genii, equal Gods—when life and thought
Sprang forth, they burst the womb of inessential Nought.

XXVI.

The earliest dweller of the world alone,
Stood on the verge of chaos: Lo! afar
O'er the wide wild abyss two meteors shone,
Sprung from the depth of its tempestuous jar:
A blood red Comet and the Morning Star
Mingling their beams in combat—as he stood,
All thoughts within his mind waged mutual war,
In dreadful sympathy—when to the flood
That fair Star fell, he turned and shed his brother's blood.

XXVII.

Thus evil triumphed, and the Spirit of evil,
One Power of many shapes which none may know,
One Shape of many names; the Fiend did revel
In victory, reigning o'er a world of woe,
For the new race of man went to and fro,
Famished and homeless, loathed and loathing, wild,
And hating good—for his immortal foe,
He changed from starry shape, beauteous and mild,
To a dire Snake, with man and beast unreconciled.

XXVIII.

The darkness lingering o'er the dawn of things,
Was Evil's breath and life: this made him strong
To soar aloft with overshadowing wings;
And the great Spirit of Good did creep among
The nations of mankind, and every tongue
Cursed and blasphemed him as he past; for none
Knew good from evil, tho' their names were hung
In mockery o'er the fane where many a groan,
As King, and Lord, and God, the conquering Fiend did own,—

XXIX.

The Fiend, whose name was Legion; Death, Decay,
Earthquake and Blight, and Want, and Madness pale,
Wingèd and wan diseases, an array
Numerous as leaves that strew the autumnal gale;
Poison, a snake in flowers, beneath the veil
Of food and mirth, hiding his mortal head;
And, without whom all these might nought avail,
Fear, Hatred, Faith, and Tyranny, who spread
Those subtle nets which snare the living and the dead.

XXX.

His spirit is their power, and they his slaves
In air, and light, and thought, and language dwell;
And keep their state from palaces to graves,
In all resorts of men—invisible,
But, when in ebon mirror, Nightmare fell
To tyrant or impostor bids them rise,
Black wingèd demon forms—whom, from the hell,
His reign and dwelling beneath nether skies,
He loosens to their dark and blasting ministries.

XXXI.

In the world's youth his empire was as firm
As its foundations—soon the Spirit of Good,
Tho' in the likeness of a loathsome worm,
Sprang from the billows of the formless flood,
Which shrank and fled; and with that Fiend of blood
Renewed the doubtful war—thrones then first shook,
And earth's immense and trampled multitude,
In hope on their own powers began to look,
And Fear, the demon pale, his sanguine shrine forsook.

XXXII.

Then Greece arose, and to its bards and sages,
In dream, the golden pinioned Genii came,
Even where they slept amid the night of ages,
Steeping their hearts in the divinest flame,
Which thy breath kindled, Power of holiest name!
And oft in cycles since, when darkness gave
New weapons to thy foe, their sunlike fame
Upon the combat shone—a light to save,
Like Paradise spread forth beyond the shadowy grave.

XXXIII.

Such is this conflict—when mankind doth strive
With its oppressors in a strife of blood,
Or when free thoughts, like lightnings are alive;
And in each bosom of the multitude
Justice and truth, with Custom's hydra brood,
Wage silent war;—when Priests and Kings dissemble
In smiles or frowns their fierce disquietude,
When round pure hearts, a host of hopes assemble,
The Snake and Eagle meet—the world's foundations tremble!

XXXIV.

Thou hast beheld that fight—when to thy home
Thou dost return, steep not its hearth in tears;
Tho' thou may'st hear that earth is now become
The tyrant's garbage, which to his compeers,
The vile reward of their dishonoured years,
He will dividing give.—The victor Fiend
Omnipotent of yore, now quails, and fears
His triumph dearly won, which soon will lend
An impulse swift and sure to his approaching end.

XXXV.

List, stranger list, mine is an human form,
Like that thou wearest—touch me—shrink not now!
My hand thou feel'st is not a ghost's, but warm
With human blood.—'Twas many years ago,
Since first my thirsting soul aspired to know
The secrets of this wondrous world, when deep
My heart was pierced with sympathy, for woe
Which could not be mine own—and thought did keep
In dream, unnatural watch beside an infant's sleep.

XXXVI.

Woe could not be mine own, since far from men
I dwelt, a free and happy orphan child,
By the sea-shore, in a deep mountain glen;
And near the waves, and thro' the forests wild,
I roamed, to storm and darkness reconciled:
For I was calm while tempest shook the sky:
But when the breathless heavens in beauty smiled,
I wept, sweet tears, yet too tumultuously
For peace, and clasped my hands aloft in ecstasy.

XXXVII.

These were forebodings of my fate—before
A woman's heart beat in my virgin breast,
It had been nurtured in divinest lore:
A dying poet gave me books, and blest
With wild but holy talk the sweet unrest
In which I watched him as he died away—
A youth with hoary hair—a fleeting guest
Of our lone mountains—and this lore did sway
My spirit like a storm, contending there alway.

XXXVIII.

Thus the dark tale which history doth unfold,
I knew, but not, methinks, as others know,
For they weep not; and Wisdom had unrolled
The clouds which hide the gulf of mortal woe:
To few can she that warning vision shew,
For I loved all things with intense devotion;
So that when Hope's deep source in fullest flow,
Like earthquake did uplift the stagnant ocean
Of human thoughts—mine shook beneath the wide emotion.

XXXIX.

When first the living blood thro' all these veins
Kindled a thought in sense, great France sprang forth,
And seized, as if to break, the ponderous chains
Which bind in woe the nations of the earth.
I saw, and started from my cottage hearth;
And to the clouds and waves in tameless gladness,
Shrieked, till they caught immeasurable mirth—
And laughed in light and music: soon, sweet madness
Was poured upon my heart, a soft and thrilling sadness.

XL.

Deep slumber fell on me:—my dreams were fire,
Soft and delightful thoughts did rest and hover
Like shadows o'er my brain; and strange desire,
The tempest of a passion, raging over
My tranquil soul, its depths with light did cover,
Which past; and calm, and darkness, sweeter far
Came—then I loved; but not a human lover!
For when I rose from sleep, the Morning Star
Shone thro' the woodbine wreaths which round my casement
were.

XLI.

'Twas like an eye which seemed to smile on me.
I watched, till by the sun made pale, it sank
Under the billows of the heaving sea;
But from its beams deep love my spirit drank,
And to my brain the boundless world now shrank
Into one thought—one image—yes, for ever!
Even like the dayspring, poured on vapours dank,
The beams of that one Star did shoot and quiver
Thro' my benighted mind—and were extinguished never.

XLII.

The day past thus: at night, methought in dream
A shape of speechless beauty did appear:
It stood like light on a careering stream
Of golden clouds which shook the atmosphere;
A winged youth, his radiant brow did wear
The Morning Star: a wild dissolving bliss
Over my frame he breathed, approaching near,
And bent his eyes of kindling tenderness
Near mine, and on my lips impressed a lingering kiss,

XLIII.

And said: a Spirit loves thee, mortal maiden,
How wilt thou prove thy worth? Then joy and sleep
Together fled, my soul was deeply laden,
And to the shore I went to muse and weep;
But as I moved, over my heart did creep
A joy less soft, but more profound and strong
Than my sweet dream; and it forbade to keep
The path of the sea-shore: that Spirit's tongue
Seemed whispering in my heart, and bore my steps along.

XLIV.

How, to that vast and peopled city led,
Which was a field of holy warfare then,
I walked among the dying and the dead,
And shared in fearless deeds with evil men,
Calm as an angel in the dragon's den—
How I braved death for liberty and truth,
And spurned at peace, and power, and fame; and when
Those hopes had lost the glory of their youth,
How sadly I returned—might move the hearer's ruth:

XLV.

Warm tears throng fast! the tale may not be said—
Know then, that when this grief had been subdued,
I was not left, like others, cold and dead;
The Spirit whom I loved in solitude
Sustained his child: the tempest-shaken wood,
The waves, the fountains, and the hush of night—
These were his voice, and well I understood
His smile divine, when the calm sea was bright
With silent stars, and Heaven was breathless with delight.

XLVI.

In lonely glens, amid the roar of rivers,
When the dim nights were moonless, have I known
Joys which no tongue can tell; my pale lip quivers
When thought revisits them:—know thou alone,
That after many wondrous years were flown,
I was awakened by a shriek of woe;
And over me a mystic robe was thrown,
By viewless hands, and a bright Star did glow
Before my steps—the Snake then met his mortal foe.

XLVII.

Thou fearest not then the Serpent on thy heart?
Fear it! she said, with brief and passionate cry,
And spake no more: that silence made me start—
I looked, and we were sailing pleasantly,
Swift as a cloud between the sea and sky,
Beneath the rising moon seen far away;
Mountains of ice, like sapphire, piled on high
Hemming the horizon round, in silence lay
On the still waters—these we did approach alway.

XLVIII.

And swift and swifter grew the vessel's motion,
So that a dizzy trance fell on my brain—
Wild music woke me: we had past the ocean
Which girds the pole, Nature's remotest reign—
And we glode fast o'er a pellucid plain
Of waters, azure with the noon-tide day.
Ætherial mountains shone around—a Fane
Stood in the midst, girt by green isles which lay
On the blue sunny deep, resplendent far away.

XLIX.

It was a Temple, such as mortal hand
Has never built, nor ecstasy, nor dream,
Reared in the cities of enchanted land:
'Twas likest Heaven, ere yet day's purple stream
Ebbs o'er the western forest, while the gleam
Of the unrisen moon among the clouds
Is gathering—when with many a golden beam
The thronging constellations rush in crowds,
Paving with fire the sky and the marmoreal floods.

L.

Like what may be conceived of this vast dome,
When from the depths which thought can seldom pierce
Genius beholds it rise, his native home,
Girt by the desarts of the Universe,
Yet, nor in painting's light, or mightier verse,
Or sculpture's marble language can invest
That shape to mortal sense—such glooms immerse
That incommunicable sight, and rest
Upon the labouring brain and overburthened breast.

LI.

Winding among the lawny islands fair,
Whose blosmy forests starred the shadowy deep,
The wingless boat paused where an ivory stair
Its fretwork in the crystal sea did steep,
Encircling that vast Fane's aërial heap:
We disembarked, and thro' a portal wide
We past—whose roof of moonstone carved, did keep
A glimmering o'er the forms on every side,
Sculptures like life and thought; immovable, deep-eyed.

LII.

We came to a vast hall, whose glorious roof
Was diamond, which had drank the lightning's sheen
In darkness, and now poured it thro' the woof
Of spell-inwoven clouds hung there to screen
Its blinding splendour—thro' such veil was seen
That work of subtlest power, divine and rare;
Orb above orb, with starry shapes between,
And hornèd moons, and meteors strange and fair,
On night-black columns poised—one hollow hemisphere!

LIII.

Ten thousand columns in that quivering light
Distinct—between whose shafts wound far away
The long and labyrinthine aisles—more bright
With their own radiance than the Heaven of Day;
And on the jasper walls around, there lay
Paintings, the poesy of mightiest thought,
Which did the Spirit's history display;
A tale of passionate change, divinely taught,
Which, in their wingèd dance, unconscious Genii wrought.

LIV.

Beneath, there sate on many a sapphire throne,
The Great, who had departed from mankind,
A mighty Senate;—some, whose white hair shone
Like mountain snow, mild, beautiful, and blind.
Some, female forms, whose gestures beamed with mind;
And ardent youths, and children bright and fair;
And some had lyres whose strings were intertwined
With pale and clinging flames, which ever there
Waked faint yet thrilling sounds that pierced the crystal air.

LV.

One seat was vacant in the midst, a throne,
Reared on a pyramid like sculptured flame,
Distinct with circling steps which rested on
Their own deep fire—soon as the Woman came
Into that hall, she shrieked the Spirit's name
And fell; and vanished slowly from the sight.
Darkness arose from her dissolving frame,
Which gathering, filled that dome of woven light,
Blotting it's spherèd stars with supernatural night.

LVI.

Then first, two glittering lights were seen to glide
In circles on the amethystine floor,
Small serpent eyes trailing from side to side,
Like meteors on a river's grassy shore,
They round each other rolled, dilating more
And more—then rose, commingling into one,
One clear and mighty planet hanging o'er
A cloud of deepest shadow, which was thrown
Athwart the glowing steps and the crystalline throne.

LVII.

The cloud which rested on that cone of flame
Was cloven; beneath the planet sate a Form,
Fairer than tongue can speak or thought may frame,
The radiance of whose limbs rose-like and warm
Flowed forth, and did with softest light inform
The shadowy dome, the sculptures, and the state
Of those assembled shapes—with clinging charm
Sinking upon their hearts and mine—He sate
Majestic, yet most mild—calm, yet compassionate.

LVIII.

Wonder and joy a passing faintness threw
Over my brow—a hand supported me,
Whose touch was magic strength: an eye of blue
Looked into mine, like moonlight, soothingly;
And a voice said—Thou must a listener be
This day—two mighty Spirits now return,
Like birds of calm, from the world's raging sea,
They pour fresh light from Hope's immortal urn;
A tale of human power—despair not—listen and learn!

LIX.

I looked, and lo! one stood forth eloquently,
His eyes were dark and deep, and the clear brow
Which shadowed them was like the morning sky,
The cloudless Heaven of Spring, when in their flow
Thro' the bright air, the soft winds as they blow
Wake the green world—his gesture did obey
The oracular mind that made his features glow,
And where his curvèd lips half open lay,
Passion's divinest stream had made impetuous way.

LX.

Beneath the darkness of his outspread hair
He stood thus beautiful: but there was One
Who sate beside him like his shadow there,
And held his hand—far lovelier—she was known
To be thus fair, by the few lines alone
Which thro' her floating locks and gathered cloke,
Glances of soul-dissolving glory, shone:—
None else beheld her eyes—in him they woke
Memories which found a tongue, as thus he silence broke.

Canto Second.

I.

THE star-light smile of children, the sweet looks
Of women, the fair breast from which I fed,
The murmur of the unreposing brooks,
And the green light which shifting overhead,
Some tangled bower of vines around me shed,
The shells on the sea-sand, and the wild flowers,
The lamp-light thro' the rafters cheerly spread,
And on the twining flax—in life's young hours
These sights and sounds did nurse my spirit's folded powers.

II.

In Argolis, beside the echoing sea,
Such impulses within my mortal frame
Arose, and they were dear to memory,
Like tokens of the dead:—but others came
Soon, in another shape: the wondrous fame
Of the past world, the vital words and deeds
Of minds whom neither time nor change can tame,
Traditions dark and old, whence evil creeds
Start forth, and whose dim shade a stream of poison feeds.

III.

I heard, as all have heard, the various story
Of human life, and wept unwilling tears.
Feeble historians of its shame and glory,
False disputants on all its hopes and fears,
Victims who worshipped ruin,—chroniclers
Of daily scorn, and slaves who loathed their state
Yet flattering power had given its ministers
A throne of judgment in the grave:—'twas fate,
That among such as these my youth should seek its mate.

IV.

The land in which I lived, by a fell bane
Was withered up. Tyrants dwelt side by side,
And stabled in our homes,—until the chain
Stifled the captive's cry, and to abide
That blasting curse men had no shame—all vied
In evil, slave and despot; fear with lust,
Strange fellowship through mutual hate had tied,
Like two dark serpents tangled in the dust,
Which on the paths of men their mingling poison thrust.

V.

Earth, our bright home, its mountains and its waters,
And the ætherial shapes which are suspended
Over its green expanse, and those fair daughters,
The clouds, of Sun and Ocean, who have blended
The colours of the air since first extended
It cradled the young world, none wandered forth
To see or feel: a darkness had descended
On every heart: the light which shews its worth,
Must among gentle thoughts and fearless take its birth.

VI.

This vital world, this home of happy spirits,
Was as a dungeon to my blasted kind,
All that despair from murdered hope inherits
They sought, and in their helpless misery blind,
A deeper prison and heavier chains did find,
And stronger tyrants:—a dark gulph before,
The realm of a stern Ruler, yawned; behind,
Terror and Time conflicting drove, and bore -
On their tempestuous flood the shrieking wretch from shore.

VII.

Out of that Ocean's wrecks had Guilt and Woe
Framed a dark dwelling for their homeless thought,
And, starting at the ghosts which to and fro
Glide o'er its dim and gloomy strand, had brought
The worship thence which they each other taught.
Well might men loathe their life, well might they turn
Even to the ills again from which they sought
Such refuge after death!—well might they learn
To gaze on this fair world with hopeless unconcern!

VIII.

For they all pined in bondage: body and soul,
Tyrant and slave, victim and torturer, bent
Before one Power, to which supreme controul
Over their will by their own weakness lent,
Made all its many names omnipotent;
All symbols of things evil, all divine;
And hymns of blood or mockery, which rent
The air from all its fanes, did intertwine
Imposture's impious toils round each discordant shrine.

IX.

I heard as all have heard, life's various story,
And in no careless heart transcribed the tale;
But, from the sneers of men who had grown hoary
In shame and scorn, from groans of crowds made pale
By famine, from a mother's desolate wail
O'er her polluted child, from innocent blood
Poured on the earth, and brows anxious and pale
With the heart's warfare; did I gather food
To feed my many thoughts: a tameless multitude!

X.

I wandered thro' the wrecks of days departed
Far by the desolated shore, when even
O'er the still sea and jagged islets darted
The light of moonrise; in the northern Heaven,
Among the clouds near the horizon driven,
The mountains lay beneath one planet pale;
Around me, broken tombs and columns riven
Looked vast in twilight, and the sorrowing gale
Waked in those ruins grey its everlasting wail!

XI.

I knew not who had framed these wonders then,
Nor, had I heard the story of their deeds;
But dwellings of a race of mightier men,
And monuments of less ungentle creeds
Tell their own tale to him who wisely heeds
The language which they speak; and now, to me
The moonlight making pale the blooming weeds,
The bright stars shining in the breathless sea,
Interpreted those scrolls of mortal mystery.

XII.

Such man has been, and such may yet become!
Aye, wiser, greater, gentler, even than they
Who on the fragments of yon shattered dome
Have stamped the sign of power—I felt the sway
Of the vast stream of ages bear away
My floating thoughts—my heart beat loud and fast—
Even as a storm let loose beneath the ray
Of the still moon, my spirit onward past
Beneath truth's steady beams upon its tumult cast.

XIII.

It shall be thus no more! too long, too long,
Sons of the glorious dead, have ye lain bound
In darkness and in ruin.—Hope is strong,
Justice and Truth their winged child have found—
Awake! arise! until the mighty sound
Of your career shall scatter in its gust
The thrones of the oppressor, and the ground
Hide the last altar's unregarded dust,
Whose Idol has so long betrayed your impious trust.

XIV.

It must be so—I will arise and waken
The multitude, and like a sulphurous hill,
Which on a sudden from its snows has shaken
The swoon of ages, it shall burst and fill
The world with cleansing fire: it must, it will—
It may not be restrained!—and who shall stand
Amid the rocking earthquake stedfast still,
But Laon? on high Freedom's desert land
A tower whose marble walls the leaguèd storms withstand!

XV.

One summer night, in commune with the hope
Thus deeply fed, amid those ruins grey
I watched, beneath the dark sky's starry cope;
And ever from that hour upon me lay
The burthen of this hope, and night or day,
In vision or in dream, clove to my breast:
Among mankind, or when gone far away
To the lone shores and mountains, 'twas a guest
Which followed where I fled, and watched when I did rest.

XVI.

These hopes found words thro' which my spirit sought
To weave a bondage of such sympathy,
As might create some response to the thought
Which ruled me now—and as the vapours lie
Bright in the out-spread morning's radiancy,
So were these thoughts invested with the light
Of language: and all bosoms made reply
On which its lustre streamed, whene'er it might
Thro' darkness wide and deep those trancèd spirits smite.

XVII.

Yes, many an eye with dizzy tears was dim,
And oft I thought to clasp my own heart's brother.
When I could feel the listener's senses swim,
And hear his breath its own swift gaspings smother
Even as my words evoked them—and another,
And yet another, I did fondly deem,
Felt that we all were sons of one great mother;
And the cold truth such sad reverse did seem,
As to awake in grief from some delightful dream.

XVIII.

Yes, oft beside the ruined labyrinth
Which skirts the hoary caves of the green deep,
Did Laon and his friend on one grey plinth,
Round whose worn base the wild waves hiss and leap,
Resting at eve, a lofty converse keep:
And that this friend was false, may now be said
Calmly—that he like other men could weep
Tears which are lies, and could betray and spread
Snares for that guileless heart which for his own had bled.

XIX.

Then, had no great aim recompensed my sorrow,
I must have sought dark respite from its stress
In dreamless rest, in sleep that sees no morrow—
For to tread life's dismaying wilderness
Without one smile to cheer, one voice to bless,
Amid the snares and scoffs of human kind,
Is hard—but I betrayed it not, nor less
With love that scorned return, sought to unbind
The interwoven clouds which make its wisdom blind.

XX.

With deathless minds which leave where they have past
A path of light, my soul communion knew;
Till from that glorious intercourse, at last,
As from a mine of magic store, I drew
Words which were weapons;—round my heart there grew
The adamantine armour of their power,
And from my fancy wings of golden hue
Sprang forth—yet not alone from wisdom's tower,
A minister of truth, these plumes young Laon bore.

XXI.

I had a little sister, whose fair eyes
Were loadstars of delight, which drew me home
When I might wander forth; nor did I prize
Aught human thing beneath Heaven's mighty dome
Beyond this child: so when sad hours were come,
And baffled hope like ice still clung to me,
Since kin were cold, and friends had now become
Heartless and false, I turned from all, to be,
Cythna, the only source of tears and smiles to thee.

XXII.

What wert thou then? A child most infantine,
Yet wandering far beyond that innocent age
In all but its sweet looks and mien divine;
Even then, methought, with the world's tyrant rage
A patient warfare thy young heart did wage,
When those soft eyes of scarcely conscious thought,
Some tale, or thine own fancies would engage
To overflow with tears, or converse fraught
With passion, o'er their depths its fleeting light had wrought.

XXIII.

She moved upon this earth a shape of brightness,
A power, that from its objects scarcely drew
One impulse of her being—in her lightness
Most like some radiant cloud of morning dew,
Which wanders thro' the waste air's pathless blue,
To nourish some far desert: she did seem
Beside me, gathering beauty as she grew,
Like the bright shade of some immortal dream
Which walks, when tempest sleeps, the wave of life's dark
stream.

XXIV.

As mine own shadow was this child to me,
A second self, far dearer and more fair;
Which clothed in undissolving radiancy,
All those steep paths which languor and despair
Of human things, had made so dark and bare,
But which I trod alone—nor, till bereft
Of friends, and overcome by lonely care
Knew I what solace for that loss was left,
Though by a bitter wound my trusting heart was cleft.

XXV.

Once she was dear, now she was all I had
To love in human life, this sister sweet,
This child of twelve years old—so she was made
My sole associate, and her willing feet
Wandered with mine where earth and ocean meet,
Beyond the aërial mountains whose vast cells
The unreposing billows ever beat,
Thro' forests wide and old, and lawnly dells,
Where boughs of incense droop over the emerald wells,

XXVI.

And warm and light I felt her clasping hand
When twined in mine: she followed where I went,
Thro' the lone paths of our immortal land.
It had no waste, but some memorial lent
Which strung me to my toil—some monument
Vital with mind: then, Cythna by my side,
Until the bright and beaming day were spent,
Would rest, with looks entreating to abide,
Too earnest and too sweet ever to be denied.

XXVII.

And soon I could not have refused her—thus
For ever, day and night, we two were ne'er
Parted, but when brief sleep divided us:
And when the pauses of the lulling air
Of noon beside the sea, had made a lair
For her soothed senses, in my arms she slept,
And I kept watch over her slumbers there,
While, as the shifting visions o'er her swept,
Amid her innocent rest by turns she smiled and wept.

XXVIII.

And, in the murmur of her dreams was heard
Sometimes the name of Laon:—suddenly
She would arise, and like the secret bird
Whom sunset wakens, fill the shore and sky
With her sweet accents—a wild melody!
Hymns which my soul had woven to Freedom, strong
The source of passion whence they rose, to be;
Triumphant strains, which, like a spirit's tongue,
To the enchanted waves that child of glory sung.

XXIX.

Her white arms lifted thro' the shadowy stream
Of her loose hair—oh, excellently great
Seemed to me then my purpose, the vast theme
Of those impassioned songs, when Cythna sate
Amid the calm which rapture doth create
After its tumult, her heart vibrating,
Her spirit o'er the ocean's floating state
From her deep eyes far wandering, on the wing
Of visions that were mine, beyond its utmost spring.

XXX.

For, before Cythna loved it, had my song
Peopled with thoughts the boundless universe,
A mighty congregation, which were strong
Where'er they trod the darkness to disperse
The cloud of that unutterable curse
Which clings upon mankind:—all things became
Slaves to my holy and heroic verse,
Earth, sea and sky, the planets, life and fame
And fate, or whate'er else binds the world's wondrous frame.

XXXI.

And this belovèd child thus felt the sway
Of my conceptions, gathering like a cloud
The very wind on which it rolls away:
Her's too were all my thoughts, ere yet endowed
With music and with light, their fountains flowed
In poesy; and her still and earnest face,
Pallid with feelings which intensely glowed
Within, was turned on mine with speechless grace,
Watching the hopes which there her heart had learned to trace.

XXXII.

In me, communion with this purest being
Kindled intenser zeal, and made me wise
In knowledge, which in her's mine own mind seeing,
Left in the human world few mysteries:
How without fear of evil or disguise
Was Cythna!—what a spirit strong and mild,
Which death, or pain or peril could despise,
Yet melt in tenderness! what genius wild
Yet mighty, was inclosed within one simple child!

XXXIII.

New lore was this—old age with its grey hair,
And wrinkled legends of unworthy things,
And icy sneers, is nought: it cannot dare
To burst the chains which life for ever flings
On the entangled soul's aspiring wings,
So is it cold and cruel, and is made
The careless slave of that dark power which brings
Evil, like blight on man, who still betrayed,
Laughs o'er the grave in which his living hopes are laid.

XXXIV.

Nor are the strong and the severe to keep
The empire of the world: thus Cythna taught
Even in the visions of her eloquent sleep,
Unconscious of the power thro' which she wrought
The woof of such intelligible thought,
As from the tranquil strength which cradled lay
In her smile-peopled rest, my spirit sought
Why the deceiver and the slave has sway
O'er heralds so divine of truth's arising day.

XXXV.

Within that fairest form, the female mind
Untainted by the poison clouds which rest
On the dark world, a sacred home did find:
But else, from the wide earth's maternal breast,
Victorious Evil, which had dispossessed
All native power, had those fair children torn,
And made them slaves to soothe his vile unrest,
And minister to lust its joys forlorn,
Till they had learned to breathe the atmosphere of scorn.

XXXVI.

This misery was but coldly felt, till she
Became my only friend, who had indued
My purpose with a wider sympathy;
Thus, Cythna mourned with me the servitude
In which the half of humankind were mewed
Victims of lust and hate, the slaves of slaves,
She mourned that grace and power were thrown as food
To the hyena lust, who, among graves,
Over his loathèd meal, laughing in agony, raves.

XXXVII.

And I, still gazing on that glorious child,
Even as these thoughts flushed o'er her:—"Cythna sweet,
Well with the world art thou unreconciled;
Never will peace and human nature meet
Till free and equal man and woman greet
Domestic peace; and ere this power can make
In human hearts its calm and holy seat;
This slavery must be broken"—as I spake,
From Cythna's eyes a light of exultation brake.

XXXVIII.

She replied earnestly :—" It shall be mine,
This task, mine, Laon!—thou hast much to gain;
Nor wilt thou at poor Cythna's pride repine,
If she should lead a happy female train
To meet thee over the rejoicing plain,
When myriads at thy call shall throng around
The Golden City."—Then the child did strain
My arm upon her tremulous heart, and wound
Her own about my neck, till some reply she found.

XXXIX.

I smiled, and spake not—"wherefore dost thou smile
At what I say? Laon, I am not weak,
And though my cheek might become pale the while,
With thee, if thou desirest, will I seek
Through their array of banded slaves to wreak
Ruin upon the tyrants. I had thought
It was more hard to turn my unpractised cheek
To scorn and shame, and this beloved spot
And thee, O dearest friend, to leave and murmur not.

XL.

"Whence came I what I am? thou, Laon, knowest
How a young child should thus undaunted be;
Methinks, it is a power which thou bestowest,
Through which I seek, by most resembling thee,
So to become most good, and great and free,
Yet far beyond this Ocean's utmost roar
In towers and huts are many like to me,
Who, could they see thine eyes, or feel such lore
As I have learnt from them, like me would fear no more.

XLI.

"Think'st thou that I shall speak unskilfully,
And none will heed me? I remember now,
How once, a slave in tortures doomed to die,
Was saved, because in accents sweet and low
He sung a song his Judge loved long ago,
As he was led to death.—All shall relent
Who hear me—tears as mine have flowed, shall flow,
Hearts beat as mine now beats, with such intent
As renovates the world; a will omnipotent!

XLII.

"Yes, I will tread Pride's golden palaces,
Thro' Penury's roofless huts and squalid cells
Will I descend, where'er in abjectness
Woman with some vile slave her tyrant dwells,
There with the music of thine own sweet spells
Will disinchant the captives, and will pour
For the despairing, from the crystal wells
Of thy deep spirit, reason's mighty lore,
And power shall then abound, and hope arise once more.

XLIII.

"Can man be free if woman be a slave?
Chain one who lives, and breathes this boundless air
To the corruption of a closed grave!
Can they whose mates are beasts, condemned to bear
Scorn, heavier far than toil or anguish, dare
To trample their oppressors? in their home
Among their babes, thou knowest a curse would wear
The shape of woman—hoary Crime would come
Behind, and Fraud rebuild religion's tottering dome.

XLIV.

"I am a child:—I would not yet depart.
When I go forth alone, bearing the lamp
Aloft which thou hast kindled in my heart,
Millions of slaves from many a dungeon damp
Shall leap in joy, as the benumbing cramp
Of ages leaves their limbs—no ill may harm
Thy Cythna ever—Truth its radiant stamp
Has fixed, as an invulnerable charm
Upon her children's brow, dark Falsehood to disarm.

XLV.

"Wait yet awhile for the appointed day—
Thou wilt depart, and I with tears shall stand
Watching thy dim sail skirt the ocean grey;
Amid the dwellers of this lonely land
I shall remain alone—and thy command
Shall then dissolve the world's unquiet trance,
And, multitudinous as the desert sand
Borne on the storm, its millions shall advance,
Thronging round thee, the light of their deliverance.

XLVI.

"Then, like the forests of some pathless mountain,
Which from remotest glens two warring winds
Involve in fire, which not the loosened fountain
Of broadest floods might quench, shall all the kinds
Of evil, catch from our uniting minds
The spark which must consume them;—Cythna then
Will have cast off the impotence that binds
Her childhood now, and thro' the paths of men
Will pass, as the charmed bird that haunts the serpent's den.

XLVII.

"We part!—O Laon, I must dare nor tremble
To meet those looks no more!—Oh, heavy stroke,
Sweet brother of my soul! can I dissemble
The agony of this thought?"—As thus she spoke
The gathered sobs her quivering accents broke,
And in my arms she hid her beating breast.
I remained still for tears—sudden she woke
As one awakes from sleep, and wildly prest
My bosom, her whole frame impetuously possess.

XLVIII.

"We part to meet again—but yon blue waste,
Yon desert wide and deep holds no recess,
Within whose happy silence, thus embraced
We might survive all ills in one caress:
Nor doth the grave—I fear 'tis passionless—
Nor yon cold vacant Heaven:—we meet again
Within the minds of men, whose lips shall bless
Our memory, and whose hopes its light retain
When these dissevered bones are trodden in the plain."

XLIX.

I could not speak, tho' she had ceased, for now
The fountains of her feeling, swift and deep,
Seemed to suspend the tumult of their flow;
So we arose, and by the star-light steep
Went homeward—neither did we speak nor weep,
But pale, were calm with passion—thus subdued
Like evening shades that o'er the mountains creep,
We moved towards our home; where, in this mood,
Each from the other sought refuge in solitude.

Canto Third.

I.

WHAT thoughts had sway over my sister's slumber
That night, I know not; but my own did seem
As if they did ten thousand years outnumber
Of waking life, the visions of a dream,
Which hid in one dim gulph the troubled stream
Of mind; a boundless chaos wild and vast,
Whose limits yet were never memory's theme:
And I lay struggling as its whirlwinds past,
Sometimes for rapture sick, sometimes for pain aghast.

II.

Two hours, whose mighty circle did embrace
More time than might make grey the infant world,
Rolled thus, a weary and tumultuous space:
When the third came, like mist on breezes curled,
From my dim sleep a shadow was unfurled:
Methought, upon the threshold of a cave
I sate with Cythna; drooping briony, pearly
With dew from the wild streamlet's shattered wave,
Hung, where we sate to taste the joys which Nature gave.

III.

We lived a day as we were wont to live,
But Nature had a robe of glory on,
And the bright air o'er every shape did weave
Intenser hues, so that the herbless stone,
The leafless bough among the leaves alone,
Had being clearer than its own could be,
And Cythna's pure and radiant self was shown
In this strange vision, so divine to me,
That if I loved before, now love was agony.

IV.

Morn fled, noon came, evening, then night descended,
And we prolonged calm talk beneath the sphere
Of the calm moon—when, suddenly was blended
With our repose a nameless sense of fear;
And from the cave behind I seemed to hear
Sounds gathering upwards!—accents incomplete,
And stifled shrieks,—and now, more near and near,
A tumult and a rush of thronging feet
The cavern's secret depths beneath the earth did beat.

V.

The scene was changed, and away, away, away!
Thro' the air and over the sea we sped,
And Cythna in my sheltering bosom lay,
And the winds bore me—thro' the darkness spread
Around, the gaping earth then vomited
Legions of foul and ghastly shapes, which hung
Upon my flight; and ever as we fled,
They plucked at Cythna—soon to me then clung
A sense of actual things those monstrous dreams among.

VI.

And I lay struggling in the impotence
Of sleep, while outward life had burst its bound.
Tho', still deluded, strove the tortured sense
To its dire wanderings to adapt the sound
Which in the light of morn was poured around
Our dwelling—breathless, pale, and unaware
I rose, and all the cottage crowded found
With armed men, whose glittering swords were bare,
And whose degraded limbs the tyrant's garb did wear.

VII.

And ere with rapid lips and gathered brow
I could demand the cause—a feeble shriek—
It was a feeble shriek, faint, far and low,
Arrested me—my mien grew calm and meek,
And grasping a small knife, I went to seek
That voice among the crowd—'twas Cythna's cry!
Beneath most calm resolve did agony wreak
Its whirlwind rage:—so I past quietly
Till I beheld, where bound, that dearest child did lie.

VIII.

I started to behold her, for delight
And exultation, and a joyance free,
Solemn, serene and lofty, filled the light
Of the calm smile with which she looked on me:
So that I feared some brainless ecstasy,
Wrought from that bitter woe, had wildered her—
“Farewell! farewell!” she said, as I drew nigh.
“At first my peace was marred by this strange stir,
Now I am calm as truth—its chosen minister.

IX.

“Look not so, Laon—say farewell in hope,
These bloody men are but the slaves who bear
Their mistress to her task—it was my scope
The slavery where they drag me now, to share,
And among captives willing chains to wear
Awhile—the rest thou knowest—return, dear friend!
Let our first triumph trample the despair
Which would ensnare us now, for in the end,
In victory or in death our hopes and fears must blend.”

X.

These words had fallen on my unheeding ear,
Whilst I had watched the motions of the crew
With seeming careless glance; not many were
Around her, for their comrades just withdrew
To guard some other victim—so I drew
My knife, and with one impulse, suddenly
All unaware three of their number slew,
And grasped a fourth by the throat, and with loud cry
My countrymen invoked to death or liberty!

XI.

What followed then, I know not—for a stroke
On my raised arm and naked head, came down,
Filling my eyes with blood—when I awoke,
I felt that they had bound me in my swoon,
And up a rock which overhangs the town,
By the steep path were bearing me: below,
The plain was filled with slaughter,—overthrown
The vineyards and the harvests, and the glow
Of blazing roofs shone far o’er the white Ocean’s flow.

XII.

Upon that rock a mighty column stood,
Whose capital seemed sculptured in the sky,
Which to the wanderers o'er the solitude
Of distant seas, from ages long gone by,
Had made a landmark; o'er its height to fly
Scarcely the cloud, the vulture, or the blast,
Has power—and when the shades of evening lie
On Earth and Ocean, its carved summits cast
The sunken day-light far thro' the aërial waste.

XIII.

They bore me to a cavern in the hill
Beneath that column, and unbound me there:
And one did strip me stark; and one did fill
A vessel from the putrid pool; one bare
A lighted torch, and four with friendless care
Guided my steps the cavern-paths along,
Then up a steep and dark and narrow stair
We wound, until the torch's fiery tongue
Amid the gushing day beamless and pallid hung.

XIV.

They raised me to the platform of the pile,
That column's dizzy height:—the grate of brass
Thro' which they thrust me, open stood the while,
As to its ponderous and suspended mass,
With chains which eat into the flesh, alas!
With brazen links, my naked limbs they bound:
The grate, as they departed to repass,
With horrid clangour fell, and the far sound
Of their retiring steps in the dense gloom were drowned.

XV.

The noon was calm and bright:—around that column
The overhanging sky and circling sea
Spread forth in silentness profound and solemn
The darkness of brief frenzy cast on me,
So that I knew not my own misery:
The islands and the mountains in the day
Like clouds reposed afar; and I could see
The town among the woods below that lay,
And the dark rocks which bound the bright and glassy bay.

XVI.

It was so calm, that scarce the feathery weed
Sown by some eagle on the topmost stone
Swayed in the air:—so bright, that noon did breed
No shadow in the sky beside mine own—
Mine, and the shadow of my chain alone.
Below the smoke of roofs involved in flame
Rested like night, all else was clearly shewn
In that broad glare, yet sound to me none came,
But of the living blood that ran within my frame.

XVII.

The peace of madness fled, and ah, too soon!
A ship was lying on the sunny main,
Its sails were flagging in the breathless noon—
Its shadow lay beyond—that sight again
Waked, with its presence, in my tranced brain
The stings of a known sorrow, keen and cold:
I knew that ship bore Cythna o'er the plain
Of waters, to her blighting slavery sold,
And watched it with such thoughts as must remain untold.

XVIII.

I watched, until the shades of evening wrapt
Earth like an exhalation—then the bark
Moved, for that calm was by the sunset snapt.
It moved a speck upon the Ocean dark:
Soon the wan stars came forth, and I could mark
Its path no more!—I sought to close mine eyes,
But like the balls, their lids were stiff and stark;
I would have risen, but ere that I could rise,
My parchèd skin was split with piercing agonies.

XIX.

I gnawed my brazen chain, and sought to sever
Its adamantine links, that I might die:
O Liberty! forgive the base endeavour,
Forgive me, if reserved for victory,
The Champion of thy faith e'er sought to fly.—
That starry night, with its clear silence, sent
Tameless resolve which laughed at misery
Into my soul—linkèd remembrance lent
To that such power, to me such a severe content.

XX.

To breathe, to be, to hope, or to despair
And die, I questioned not; nor, though the Sun
Its shafts of agony kindling thro' the air
Moved over me, nor though in evening dun,
Or when the stars their visible courses run,
Or morning, the wide universe was spread
In dreary calmness round me, did I shun
Its presence, nor seek refuge with the dead
From one faint hope whose flower a dropping poison shed.

XXI.

Two days thus past—I neither raved nor died—
Thirst raged within me, like a scorpion's nest
Built in mine entrails: I had spurned aside
The water-vessel, while despair possest
My thoughts, and now no drop remained! the uprest
Of the third sun brought hunger—but the crust
Which had been left, was to my craving breast
Fuel, not food. I chewed the bitter dust,
And bit my bloodless arm, and licked the brazen rust.

XXII.

My brain began to fail when the fourth morn
Burst o'er the golden isles—a fearful sleep,
Which through the caverns dreary and forlorn
Of the riven soul, sent its foul dreams to sweep
With whirlwind swiftness—a fall far and deep,—
A gulph, a void, a sense of senselessness—
These things dwelt in me, even as shadows keep
Their watch in some dim charnel's loneliness,
A shoreless sea, a sky sunless and planetless!

XXIII.

The forms which peopled this terrific trance
I well remember—like a quire of devils,
Around me they involved a giddy dance;
Legions seemed gathering from the misty levels
Of Ocean, to supply those ceaseless revels,
Foul, ceaseless shadows:—thought could not divide
The actual world from these entangling evils,
Which so bemocked themselves, that I descried
All shapes like mine own self, hideously multiplied.

XXIV.

The sense of day and night, of false and true,
Was dead within me. Yet two visions burst
That darkness—one, as since that hour I knew,
Was not a phantom of the realms accurst,
Where then my spirit dwelt—but of the first
I know not yet, was it a dream or no.
But both, tho' not distincter, were immersed
In hues which, when thro' memory's waste they flow,
Make their divided streams more bright and rapid now.

XXV.

Methought that gate was lifted, and the seven
Who brought me thither, four stiff corpses bare,
And from the frieze to the four winds of Heaven
Hung them on high by the entangled hair:
Swarthy were three—the fourth was very fair:
As they retired, the golden moon upsprung,
And eagerly, out in the giddy air,
Leaning that I might eat, I stretched and clung
Over the shapeless depth in which those corpses hung.

XXVI.

A woman's shape, now lank and cold and blue,
The dwelling of the many-coloured worm
Hung there, the white and hollow cheek I drew
To my dry lips—what radiance did inform
Those horny eyes? whose was that withered form?
Alas, alas! it seemed that Cythna's ghost
Laughed in those looks, and that the flesh was warm
Within my teeth!—a whirlwind keen as frost
Then in its sinking gulphs my sickening spirit tost.

XXVII.

Then seemed it that a tameless hurricane
Arose, and bore me in its dark career
Beyond the sun, beyond the stars that wane
On the verge of formless space—it languished there,
And dying, left a silence lone and drear,
More horrible than famine:—in the deep
The shape of an old man did then appear,
Stately and beautiful, that dreadful sleep
His heavenly smiles dispersed, and I could wake and weep.

XXVIII.

And when the blinding tears had fallen, I saw
That column, and those corpses, and the moon,
And felt the poisonous tooth of hunger gnaw
My vitals, I rejoiced, as if the boon
Of senseless death would be accorded soon;—
When from that stony gloom a voice arose,
Solemn and sweet as when low winds attune
The midnight pines; the grate did then uncloze,
And on that reverend form the moonlight did repose.

XXIX.

He struck my chains, and gently spake and smiled:
As they were loosened by that Hermit old,
Mine eyes were of their madness half beguiled,
To answer those kind looks—he did infold
His giant arms around me, to uphold
My wretched frame, my scorched limbs he wound
In linen moist and balmy, and as cold
As dew to drooping leaves;—the chain, with sound
Like earthquake, thro' the chasm of that steep stair did bound,

XXX.

As lifting me, it fell!—What next I heard,
Were billows leaping on the harbour bar,
And the shrill sea-wind, whose breath idly stirred
My hair;—I looked abroad, and saw a star
Shining beside a sail, and distant far
That mountain and its column, the known mark
Of those who in the wide deep wandering are,
So that I feared some Spirit, fell and dark,
In trance had lain me thus within a fiendish bark.

XXXI.

For now indeed, over the salt sea billow
I sailed: yet dared not look upon the shape
Of him who ruled the helm, altho' the pillow
For my light head was hollowed in his lap,
And my bare limbs his mantle did enwrap,
Fearing it was a fiend: at last, he bent
O'er me his aged face, as if to snap
Those dreadful thoughts the gentle grandsire bent,
And to my inmost soul his soothing looks he sent.

XXXII.

A soft and healing potion to my lips
At intervals he raised—now looked on high,
To mark if yet the starry giant dips
His zone in the dim sea—now cheeringly,
Though he said little, did he speak to me.
“It is a friend beside thee—take good cheer,
Poor victim, thou art now at liberty!”
I joyed as those a human tone to hear,
Who in cells deep and lone have languished many a year.

XXXIII.

A dim and feeble joy, whose glimpses oft
Were quenched in a relapse of wildering dreams,
Yet still methought we sailed, until aloft
The stars of night grew pallid, and the beams
Of morn descended on the ocean streams,
And still that aged man, so grand and mild,
Tended me, even as some sick mother seems
To hang in hope over a dying child,
Till in the azure East darkness again was piled.

XXXIV.

And then the night-wind steaming from the shore,
Sent odours dying sweet across the sea,
And the swift boat the little waves which bore,
Were cut by its keen keel, tho' slantingly;
Soon I could hear the leaves sigh, and could see
The myrtle blossoms starring the dim grove,
As past the pebbly beach the boat did flee
On sidelong wing, into a silent cove,
Where ebon pines a shade under the starlight wove.

Canto Fourth.

I.

THE old man took the oars, and soon the bark
Smote on the beach beside a tower of stone;
It was a crumbling heap, whose portal dark
With blooming ivy trails was overgrown;
Upon whose floor the spangling sands were strown,
And rarest sea-shells, which the eternal flood,
Slave to the mother of the months, had thrown
Within the walls of that grey tower, which stood
A changeling of man's art, nursed amid Nature's brood.

II.

When the old man his boat had anchorèd,
He wound me in his arms with tender care,
And very few, but kindly words he said,
And bore me thro' the tower adown a stair,
Whose smooth descent some ceaseless step to wear
For many a year had fallen—We came at last
To a small chamber, which with mosses rare
Was tapestried, where me his soft hands placed
Upon a couch of grass and oak-leaves interlaced.

III.

The moon was darting through the lattices
Its yellow light, warm as the beams of day—
So warm, that to admit the dewy breeze,
The old man opened them; the moonlight lay
Upon a lake whose waters wove their play
Even to the threshold of that lonely home:
Within was seen in the dim wavering ray,
The antique sculptured roof, and many a tome
Whose lore had made that sage all that he had become.

IV.

The rock-built barrier of the sea was past,—
And I was on the margin of a lake,
A lonely lake, amid the forests vast
And snowy mountains:—did my spirit wake
From sleep, as many-coloured as the snake
That girds eternity? in life and truth,
Might not my heart its cravings ever slake?
Was Cythna then a dream, and all my youth,
And all its hopes and fears, and all its joy and ruth?

V.

Thus madness came again,—a milder madness,
Which darkened nought but time's unquiet flow
With supernatural shades of clinging sadness;
That gentle Hermit, in my helpless woe,
By my sick couch was busy to and fro,
Like a strong spirit ministrant of good:
When I was healed, he led me forth to shew
The wonders of his sylvan solitude,
And we together sate by that isle-fretted flood.

VI.

He knew his soothing words to weave with skill
From all my madness told; like mine own heart,
Of Cythna would he question me, until
That thrilling name had ceased to make me start,
From his familiar lips—it was not art,
Of wisdom and of justice when he spoke—
When mid soft looks of pity, there would dart
A glance as keen as is the lightning's stroke
When it doth rive the knots of some ancestral oak.

VII.

Thus slowly from my brain the darkness rolled,
My thoughts their due array did re-assume
Thro' the enchantments of that Hermit old;
Then I bethought me of the glorious doom
Of those who sternly struggle to relume
The lamp of Hope o'er man's bewildered lot,
And, sitting by the waters, in the gloom
Of eve, to that friend's heart I told my thought—
That heart which had grown old, but had corrupted not.

VIII.

That hoary man had spent his livelong age
In converse with the dead, who leave the stamp
Of ever-burning thoughts on many a page,
When they are gone into the senseless damp
Of graves;—his spirit thus became a lamp
Of splendour, like to those on which it fed:
Thro' peopled haunts, the City and the Camp,
Deep thirst for knowledge had his footsteps led,
And all the ways of men among mankind he read.

IX.

But custom maketh blind and obdurate
The loftiest hearts:—he had beheld the woe
In which mankind was bound, but deemed that fate
Which made them abject, would preserve them so;
And in such faith, some steadfast joy to know,
He sought this cell: but when fame went abroad,
That one in Argolis did undergo
Torture for liberty, and that the crowd
High truths from gifted lips had heard and understood;

X.

And that the multitude was gathering wide;
His spirit leaped within his aged frame,
In lonely peace he could no more abide,
But to the land on which the victor's flame
Had fed, my native land, the Hermit came:
Each heart was there a shield, and every tongue
Was as a sword of truth—young Laon's name
Rallied their secret hopes, tho' tyrants sung
Hymns of triumphant joy our scattered tribes among.

XI.

He came to the lone column on the rock,
And with his sweet and mighty eloquence
The hearts of those who watched it did unlock,
And made them melt in tears of penitence.
They gave him entrance free to bear me thence.
"Since this," the old man said, "seven years are spent
While slowly truth on thy benighted sense
Has crept; the hope which wildered it has lent
Meanwhile, to me the power of a sublime intent.

XII.

"Yes, from the records of my youthful state,
And from the lore of bards and sages old,
From whatsoever my wakened thoughts create
Out of the hopes of thine aspirings bold,
Have I collected language to unfold
Truth to my countrymen; from shore to shore
Doctrines of human power my words have told,
They have been heard, and men aspire to more
Than they have ever gained or ever lost of yore.

XIII.

"In secret chambers parents read, and weep,
My writings to their babes, no longer blind;
And young men gather when their tyrants sleep,
And vows of faith each to the other bind;
And marriageable maidens, who have pined
With love, till life seemed melting thro' their look,
A warmer zeal, a nobler hope now find;
And every bosom thus is rapt and shook,
Like autumn's myriad leaves in one swoln mountain brook.

XIV.

"The tyrants of the Golden City tremble
At voices which are heard about the streets,
The ministers of fraud can scarce dissemble
The lies of their own heart; but when one meets
Another at the shrine, he inly weets,
Tho' he says nothing, that the truth is known;
Murderers are pale upon the judgment seats,
And gold grows vile even to the wealthy crone,
And laughter fills the Fane, and curses shake the Throne.

XV.

"Kind thoughts, and mighty hopes, and gentle deeds
Abound, for fearless love, and the pure law
Of mild equality and peace, succeeds
To faiths which long have held the world in awe,
Bloody and false, and cold:—as whirlpools draw
All wrecks of Ocean to their chasm, the sway
Of thy strong genius, Laon, which foresaw
This hope, compels all spirits to obey,
Which round thy secret strength now throng in wide array.

XVI.

“For I have been thy passive instrument”—
(As thus the old man spake, his countenance
Gleamed on me like a spirit’s)—“thou hast lent
To me, to all, the power to advance
Towards this unforeseen deliverance
From our ancestral chains—aye, thou didst rear
That lamp of hope on high, which time nor chance,
Nor change may not extinguish, and my share
Of good, was o’er the world its gathered beams to bear.

XVII.

“But I, alas! am both unknown and old,
And though the woof of wisdom I know well
To dye in hues of language, I am cold
In seeming, and the hopes which inly dwell,
My manners note that I did long repel;
But Laon’s name to the tumultuous throng
Were like the star whose beams the waves compel
And tempests, and his soul-subduing tongue
Were as a lance to quell the mailed crest of wrong.

XVIII.

“Perchance blood need not flow, if thou at length
Wouldst rise, perchance the very slaves would spare
Their brethren and themselves; great is the strength
Of words—for lately did a maiden fair,
Who from her childhood has been taught to bear
The tyrant’s heaviest yoke, arise, and make
Her sex the law of truth and freedom hear,
And with these quiet words—‘for thine own sake
I prithee spare me;’—did with ruth so take

XIX.

“All hearts, that even the torturer who had bound
Her meek calm frame, ere it was yet impaled,
Loosened her weeping then; nor could be found
One human hand to harm her—unassailed
Therefore she walks thro’ the great City, veiled
In virtue’s adamantine eloquence,
’Gainst scorn, and death and pain thus trebly mailed,
And blending in the smiles of that defence,
The Serpent and the Dove, Wisdom and Innocence.

XX.

"The wild-eyed women throng around her path:
From their luxurious dungeons, from the dust
Of meaner thralls, from the oppressor's wrath,
Or the caresses of his sated lust
They congregate:—in her they put their trust;
The tyrants send their armèd slaves to quell
Her power;—they, even like a thunder gust
Caught by some forest, bend beneath the spell
Of that young maiden's speech, and to their chiefs rebel.

XXI.

"Thus she doth equal laws and justice teach
To woman, outraged and polluted long;
Gathering the sweetest fruit in human reach
For those fair hands now free, while armèd wrong
Trembles before her look, tho' it be strong;
Thousands thus dwell beside her, virgins bright,
And matrons with their babes, a stately throng!
Lovers renew the vows which they did plight
In early faith, and hearts long parted now unite,

XXII.

"And homeless orphans find a home near her,
And those poor victims of the proud, no less,
Fair wrecks, on whom the smiling world with stir,
Thrusts the redemption of its wickedness:—
In squalid huts, and in its palaces
Sits Lust alone, while o'er the land is borne
Her voice, whose awful sweetness doth repress
All evil, and her foes relenting turn,
And cast the vote of love in hope's abandoned urn.

XXIII.

"So in the populous City, a young maiden
Has baffled Havock of the prey which he
Marks as his own, whene'er with chains o'erladen
Men make them arms to hurl down tyranny,
False arbiter between the bound and free;
And o'er the land, in hamlets and in towns
The multitudes collect tumultuously,
And throng in arms; but tyranny disowns
Their claim, and gathers strength around its trembling thrones.

XXIV.

"Blood soon, altho' unwillingly to shed,
The free cannot forbear—the Queen of Slaves,
The hood-winked Angel of the blind and dead,
Custom, with iron mace points to the graves
Where her own standard desolately waves
Over the dust of Prophets and of Kings.
Many yet stand in her array—'she paves
Her path with human hearts,' and o'er it flings
The wildering gloom of her immeasurable wings.

XXV.

"There is a plain beneath the City's wall,
Bounded by misty mountains, wide and vast,
Millions there lift at Freedom's thrilling call
Ten thousand standards wide, they load the blast
Which bears one sound of many voices past,
And startles on his throne their sceptered foe:
He sits amid his idle pomp aghast,
And that his power hath past away, doth know—
Why pause the victor swords to seal his overthrow?

XXVI.

"The tyrant's guards resistance yet maintain:
Fearless, and fierce, and hard as beasts of blood,
They stand a speck amid the peopled plain;
Carnage and ruin have been made their food
From infancy—ill has become their good,
And for its hateful sake their will has wove
The chains which eat their hearts—the multitude
Surrounding them, with words of human love,
Seek from their own decay their stubborn minds to move.

XXVII.

"Over the land is felt a sudden pause,
As night and day, those ruthless bands around,
The watch of love is kept:—a trance which awes
The thoughts of men with hope—as when the sound
Of whirlwind, whose fierce blasts the waves and clouds con-
found,
Dies suddenly, the mariner in fear
Feels silence sink upon his heart—thus bound,
The conquerors pause, and oh! may freemen ne'er
Clasp the relentless knees of Dread the murderer!

XXVIII.

"If blood be shed, 'tis but a change and choice
Of bonds,—from slavery to cowardice
A wretched fall!—uplift thy charmed voice,
Pour on those evil men the love that lies
Hovering within those spirit-soothing eyes—
Arise, my friend, farewell!"—As thus he spake,
From the green earth lightly I did arise,
As one out of dim dreams that doth awake,
And looked upon the depth of that reposing lake.

XXIX.

I saw my countenance reflected there;—
And then my youth fell on me like a wind
Descending on still waters—my thin hair
Was prematurely grey, my face was lined
With channels, such as suffering leaves behind,
Not age;—my brow was pale, but in my cheek
And lips a flush of gnawing fire did find
Their food and dwelling; tho' mine eyes might speak
A subtle mind and strong within a frame thus weak.

XXX.

And tho' their lustre now was spent and faded,
Yet in my hollow looks and withered mien
The likeness of a shape for which was braided
The brightest woof of genius, still was seen—
One who, methought, had gone from the world's scene,
And left it vacant—'twas her brother's face—
It might resemble her—it once had been
The mirror of her thoughts, and still the grace
Which her mind's shadow cast, left there a lingering trace.

XXXI.

What then was I? She slumbered with the dead.
Glory and joy and peace, had come and gone.
Doth the cloud perish, when the beams are fled
Which steeped its skirts in gold? or dark and lone,
Doth it not thro' the paths of night unknown,
On outspread wings of its own wind upborne
Pour rain upon the earth? the stars are shewn,
When the cold moon sharpens her silver horn
Under the sea, and make the wide night not forlorn.

XXXII.

Strengthened in heart, yet sad, that aged man
 I left, with interchange of looks and tears,
 And lingering speech, and to the Camp began
 My way. O'er many a mountain chain which rears
 Its hundred crests aloft, my spirit bears
 My frame; o'er many a dale and many a moor,
 And gaily now meseems serene earth wears
 The blosmy spring's star-bright investiture,
 A vision which aught sad from sadness might allure.

XXXIII.

My powers revived within me, and I went
 As one whom winds waft o'er the bending grass,
 Thro' many a vale of that broad continent.
 At night when I reposed, fair dreams did pass
 Before my pillow;—my own Cythna was,
 Not like a child of death, among them ever;
 When I arose from rest, a woeful mass
 That gentlest sleep seemed from my life to sever,
 As if the light of youth were not withdrawn for ever.

XXXIV.

Aye as I went, that maiden who had reared
 The torch of Truth afar, of whose high deeds
 The Hermit in his pilgrimage had heard,
 Haunted my thoughts.—Ah, Hope its sickness feeds
 With whatsoe'er it finds, or flowers or weeds!
 Could she be Cythna?—Was that corpse a shade
 Such as self-torturing thought from madness breeds?
 Why was this hope not torture? yet it made
 A light around my steps which would not ever fade.

Canto Fifth.

I.

OVER the utmost hill at length I sped,
A snowy steep:—the moon was hanging low
Over the Asian mountains, and outspread
The plain, the City, and the Camp below,
Skirted the midnight Ocean's glimmering flow,
The City's moon-lit spires and myriad lamps,
Like stars in a sublunar sky did glow,
And fires blazed far amid the scattered camps,
Like springs of flame, which burst where'er swift Earth-
quake stamps.

II.

All slept but those in watchful arms who stood,
And those who sate tending the beacon's light,
And the few sounds from that vast multitude
Made silence more profound—Oh, what a might
Of human thought was cradled in that night!
How many hearts impenetrably veiled,
Beat underneath its shade, what secret fight
Evil and good, in woven passions mailed,
Waged thro' that silent throng; a war that never failed!

III.

And now the Power of Good held victory,
So, thro' the labyrinth of many a tent,
Among the silent millions who did lie
In innocent sleep, exultingly I went;
The moon had left Heaven desert now, but lent
From eastern morn the first faint lustre showed
An armèd youth—over his spear he bent
His downward face—"A friend!" I cried aloud,
And quickly common hopes made freemen understood.

IV.

I sate beside him while the morning beam
Crept slowly over Heaven, and talked with him
Of those immortal hopes, a glorious theme!
Which led us forth, until the stars grew dim:
And all the while, methought, his voice did swim,
As if it drown'd in remembrance were
Of thoughts which make the moist eyes overbrim:
At last, when daylight 'gan to fill the air,
He looked on me, and cried in wonder—"thou art here!"

V.

Then, suddenly, I knew it was the youth
In whom its earliest hopes my spirit found;
But envious tongues had stained his spotless truth,
And thoughtless pride his love in silence bound,
And shame and sorrow mine in toils had wound,
Whilst he was innocent, and I deluded;
The truth now came upon me, on the ground
Tears of repenting joy, which fast intruded,
Fell fast, and o'er its peace our mingled spirits brooded.

VI.

Thus, while with rapid lips and earnest eyes
We talked, a sound of sweeping conflict spread,
As from the earth did suddenly arise;
From every tent roused by that clamour dread,
Our bands outsprung and seized their arms—we sped
Towards the sound: our tribes were gathering far.
Those sanguine slaves amid ten thousand dead
Stabbed in their sleep, trampled in treacherous war
The gentle hearts whose power their lives had sought to spare.

VII.

Like rabid snakes, that sting some gentle child
Who brings them food, when winter false and fair
Allures them forth with its cold smiles, so wild
They rage among the camp;—they overbear
The patriot hosts—confusion, then despair
Descends like night—when "Laon!" one did cry:
Like a bright ghost from Heaven that shout did scare
The slaves, and widening thro' the vaulted sky,
Seemed sent from Earth to Heaven in sign of victory.

VIII.

In sudden panic those false murderers fled,
Like insect tribes before the northern gale:
But swifter still, our hosts encompassèd
Their shattered ranks, and in a craggy vale,
Where even their fierce despair might nought avail
Hemmed them around!—and then revenge and fear
Made the high virtue of the patriots fail:
One pointed on his foe the mortal spear—
I rushed before its point, and cried, “Forbear, forbear!”

IX.

The spear transfixèd my arm that was uplifted
In swift expostulation, and the blood
Gushed round its point: I smiled, and—“Oh! thou gifted
With eloquence which shall not be withstood,
Flow thus!”—I cried in joy, “thou vital flood,
Until my heart be dry, ere thus the cause
For which thou wert aught worthy be subdued—
Ah, ye are pale,—ye weep,—your passions pause,—
'Tis well! ye feel the truth of love's benignant laws.

X.

“Soldiers, our brethren and our friends are slain.
Ye murdered them, I think, as they did sleep!
Alas, what have ye done? the slightest pain
Which ye might suffer, there were eyes to weep
But ye have quenched them—there were smiles to steep
Your hearts in balm, but they are lost in woe;
And those whom love did set his watch to keep
Around your tents truth's freedom to bestow,
Ye stabbed as they did sleep—but they forgive ye now.

XI.

“O wherefore should ill ever flow from ill,
And pain still keener pain forever breed?
We all are brethren—even the slaves who kill
For hire, are men; and to avenge misdeed
On the misdoer, doth but Misery feed
With her own broken heart! O Earth, O Heaven!
And thou, dread Nature, which to every deed
And all that lives, or is, to be hath given,
Even as to thee have these done ill, and are forgiven.

XII.

"Join then your hands and hearts, and let the past
Be as a grave which gives not up its dead
To evil thoughts"—a film then overcast
My sense with dimness, for the wound, which bled
Freshly, swift shadows o'er mine eyes had shed.
When I awoke, I lay 'mid friends and foes,
And earnest countenances on me shed
The light of questioning looks, whilst one did close
My wound with balmiest herbs, and soothed me to repose;

XIII.

And one whose spear had pierced me, leaned beside
With quivering lips and humid eyes;—and all
Seemed like some brothers on a journey wide
Gone forth, whom now strange meeting did befall
In a strange land, round one whom they might call
Their friend, their chief, their father, for assay
Of peril, which had saved them from the thrall
Of death, now suffering. Thus the vast array
Of those fraternal bands were reconciled that day.

XIV.

Lifting the thunder of their acclamation,
Towards the City then the multitude,
And I among them, went in joy—a nation
Made free by love;—a mighty brotherhood
Linked by a jealous interchange of good;
A glorious pageant, more magnificent
Than kingly slaves arrayed in gold and blood,
When they return from carnage, and are sent
In triumph bright beneath the populous battlement.

XV.

Afar, the city walls were thronged on high,
And myriads on each giddy turret clung,
And to each spire far lessening in the sky,
Bright pennons on the idle winds were hung;
As we approached a shout of joyance sprung
At once from all the crowd, as if the vast
And peopled Earth its boundless skies among
The sudden clamour of delight had cast,
When from before its face some general wreck had past.

XVI.

Our armies thro' the City's hundred gates
Were poured, like brooks which to the rocky lair
Of some deep lake, whose silence them awaits,
Throng from the mountains when the storms are there;
And as we past thro' the calm sunny air
A thousand flower-inwoven crowns were shed,
The token flowers of truth and freedom fair,
And fairest hands bound them on many a head,
Those angels of love's heaven, that over all was spread.

XVII.

I trod as one tranced in some rapturous vision:
Those bloody bands so lately reconciled,
Were, ever as they went, by the contrition
Of anger turned to love from ill beguiled,
And every one on them more gently smiled,
Because they had done evil:—the sweet awe
Of such mild looks made their own hearts grow mild,
And did with soft attraction ever draw
Their spirits to the love of freedom's equal law.

XVIII.

And they, and all, in one loud symphony
My name with Liberty commingling, lifted,
"The friend and the preserver of the free!
The parent of this joy!" and fair eyes, gifted
With feelings caught from one who had uplifted
The light of a great spirit, round me shone;
And all the shapes of this grand scenery shifted
Like restless clouds before the steadfast sun,—
Where was that Maid? I asked, but it was known of none.

XIX.

Laone was the name her love had chosen,
For she was nameless, and her birth none knew:
Where was Laone now?—the words were frozen
Within my lips with fear; but to subdue
Such dreadful hope, to my great task was due,
And when at length one brought reply, that she
To-morrow would appear, I then withdrew
To judge what need for that great throng might be,
For now the stars came thick over the twilight sea.

XX.

Yet need was none for rest or food to care,
Even tho' that multitude was passing great,
Since each one for the other did prepare
All kindly succour—Therefore to the gate
Of the Imperial House, now desolate,
I past, and there was found aghast, alone,
The fallen Tyrant!—silently he sate
Upon the footstool of his golden throne,
Which starred with sunny gems, in its own lustre shone.

XXI.

Alone, but for one child, who led before him
A graceful dance: the only living thing
Of all the crowd, which thither to adore him
Flocked yesterday, who solace sought to bring
In his abandonment!—she knew the King
Had praised her dance of yore, and now she wove
Its circles, aye weeping and murmuring
'Mid her sad task of unregarded love,
That to no smiles it might his speechless sadness move.

XXII.

She fled to him, and wildly clasped his feet
When human steps were heard:—he moved nor spoke,
Nor changed his hue, nor raised his looks to meet
The gaze of strangers—our loud entrance woke
The echoes of the hall, which circling broke
The calm of its recesses,—like a tomb
Its sculptured walls vacantly to the stroke
Of footfalls answered, and the twilight's gloom
Lay like a charnel's mist within the radiant dome.

XXIII.

The little child stood up when we came nigh;
Her lips and cheeks seemed very pale and wan,
But on her forehead, and within her eye
Lay beauty, which makes hearts that feed thereon
Sick with excess of sweetness; on the throne
She leaned;—the King with gathered brow, and lips
Wreathed by long scorn, did inly sneer and frown
With hue like that when some great painter dips
His pencil in the gloom of earthquake and eclipse.

XXIV.

She stood beside him like a rainbow braided
Within some storm, when scarce its shadows vast
From the blue paths of the swift sun have faded;
A sweet and solemn smile, like Cythna's, cast
One moment's light, which made my heart beat fast,
O'er that child's parted lips—a gleam of bliss,
A shade of vanished days,—as the tears past
Which wrapt it, even as with a father's kiss
I pressed those softest eyes in trembling tenderness.

XXV.

The sceptered wretch then from that solitude
I drew, and of his change compassionate,
With words of sadness soothed his rugged mood.
But he, while pride and fear held deep debate,
With sullen guile of ill-dissembled hate
Glared on me as a toothless snake might glare:
Pity, not scorn I felt, tho' desolate
The desolator now, and unaware
The curses which he mocked had caught him by the hair.

XXVI.

I led him forth from that which now might seem
A gorgeous grave: thro' portals sculptured deep
With imagery beautiful as dream
We went, and left the shades which tend on sleep
Over its unregarded gold to keep
Their silent watch.—The child trod faintly,
And as she went, the tears which she did weep
Glanced in the star-light; wildered seemèd she,
And when I spake, for sobs she could not answer me.

XXVII.

At last the tyrant cried, "She hungers, slave,
Stab her, or give her bread!"—It was a tone
Such as sick fancies in a new made grave
Might hear. I trembled, for the truth was known,
He with this child had thus been left alone,
And neither had gone forth for food,—but he
In mingled pride and awe cowered near his throne,
And she a nursling of captivity
Knew nought beyond those walls, nor what such change
might be.

XXVIII.

And he was troubled at a charm withdrawn
 Thus suddenly; that scepters ruled no more—
 That even from gold the dreadful strength was gone,
 Which once made all things subject to its power—
 Such wonder seized him, as if hour by hour
 The past had come again; and the swift fall
 Of one so great and terrible of yore,
 To desolateness, in the hearts of all
 Like wonder stirred, who saw such awful change befall.

XXIX.

A mighty crowd, such as the wide land pours
 Once in a thousand years, now gathered round
 The fallen tyrant;—like the rush of showers
 Of hail in spring, pattering along the ground,
 Their many footsteps fell, else came no sound
 From the wide multitude: that lonely man
 Then knew the burthen of his change, and found,
 Concealing in the dust his visage wan,
 Refuge from the keen looks which thro' his bosom ran.

XXX.

And he was faint withal: I sate beside him
 Upon the earth, and took that child so fair
 From his weak arms, that ill might none betide him
 Or her;—when food was brought to them, her share
 To his averted lips the child did bear,
 But when she saw he had enough, she ate
 And wept the while;—the lonely man's despair
 Hunger then overcame, and of his state
 Forgetful, on the dust as in a trance he sate.

XXXI.

Slowly the silence of the multitudes
 Past, as when far is heard in some lone dell
 The gathering of a wind among the woods—
 And he is fallen! they cry, he who did dwell
 Like famine or the plague, or aught more fell
 Among our homes, is fallen! the murderer
 Who slaked his thirsting soul as from a well
 Of blood and tears with ruin! he is here!
 Sunk in a gulph of scorn from which none may him rear!

XXXII.

Then was heard—He who judged let him be brought
To judgment! blood for blood cries from the soil
On which his crimes have deep pollution wrought!
Shall Othman only unavenged despoil?
Shall they who by the stress of grinding toil,
Wrest from the unwilling earth his luxuries,
Perish for crime, while his foul blood may boil,
Or creep within his veins at will?—Arise!
And to high justice make her chosen sacrifice.

XXXIII.

“What do ye seek? what fear ye?” then I cried,
Suddenly starting forth, “that ye should shed
The blood of Othman—if your hearts are tried
In the true love of freedom, cease to dread
This one poor lonely man—beneath Heaven spread
In purest light above us all, thro’ earth,
Maternal earth, who doth her sweet smiles shed
For all, let him go free; until the worth
Of human nature win from these a second birth.

XXXIV.

“What call ye *justice*? is there one who ne’er
In secret thought has wished another’s ill?—
Are ye all pure? let those stand forth who hear,
And tremble not. Shall they insult and kill,
If such they be? their mild eyes can they fill
With the false anger of the hypocrite?
Alas, such were not pure—the chastened will
Of virtue sees that justice is the light
Of love, and not revenge, and terror and despite.”

XXXV.

The murmur of the people slowly dying,
Paused as I spake, then those who near me were,
Cast gentle looks where the lone man was lying
Shrouding his head, which now that infant fair
Clasped on her lap in silence;—thro’ the air
Sobs were then heard, and many kissed my feet
In pity’s madness, and to the despair
Of him whom late they cursed, a solace sweet
His very victims brought—soft looks and speeches meet.

XXXVI.

Then to a home for his repose assigned,
Accompanied by the still throng he went
In silence, where to soothe his rankling mind,
Some likeness of his antient state was lent;
And if his heart could have been innocent
As those who pardoned him, he might have ended
His days in peace; but his straight lips were bent,
Men said, into a smile which guile portended,
A sight with which that child like hope with fear was blended.

XXXVII.

'Twas midnight now, the eve of that great day
Whereon the many nations at whose call
The chains of earth like mist melted away,
Decreed to hold a sacred Festival,
A rite to attest the equality of all
Who live. So to their homes, to dream or wake
All went. The sleepless silence did recal
Laone to my thoughts, with hopes that make
The flood recede from which their thirst they seek to slake.

XXXVIII.

The dawn flowed forth, and from its purple fountains
I drank those hopes which make the spirit quail;
As to the plain between the misty mountains
And the great City, with a countenance pale
I went:—it was a sight which might avail
To make men weep exulting tears, for whom
Now first from human power the reverend veil
Was torn, to see Earth from her general womb
Pour forth her swarming sons to a fraternal doom:

XXXIX.

To see, far glancing in the misty morning,
The signs of that innumerable host,
To hear one sound of many made, the warning
Of Earth to Heaven from its free children tost,
While the eternal hills, and the sea lost
In wavering light, and, starring the blue sky
The city's myriad spires of gold, almost
With human joy made mute society.
Its witnesses with men who must hereafter be.

XL.

To see like some vast island from the Ocean,
The Altar of the Federation rear
Its pile i'the midst; a work, which the devotion
Of millions in one night created there,
Sudden, as when the moonrise makes appear
Strange clouds in the east; a marble pyramid
Distinct with steps: that mighty shape did wear
The light of genius; its still shadow hid
Far ships: to know its height the morning mists forbid!

XLI.

To hear the restless multitudes forever
Around the base of that great Altar flow,
As on some mountain islet burst and shiver
Atlantic waves; and solemnly and slow
As the wind bore that tumult to and fro,
To feel the dreamlike music, which did swim
Like beams thro' floating clouds on waves below
Falling in pauses, from that Altar dim
As silver sounding tongues breathed an aërial hymn.

XLII.

To hear, to see, to live, was on that morn
Lethæan joy! so that all those assembled
Cast off their memories of the past outworn;
Two only bosoms with their own life trembled,
And mine was one,—and we had both dissembled;
So with a beating heart I went, and one,
Who having much, covets yet more, resembled;
A lost and dear possession, which not won,
He walks in lonely gloom beneath the noonday sun.

XLIII.

To the great Pyramid I came: its stair
With female quires was thronged: the loveliest
Among the free, grouped with its sculptures rare;
As I approached, the morning's golden mist,
Which now the wonder-stricken breezes kist
With their cold lips, fled, and the summit shone
Like Athos seen from Samothracia, drest
In earliest light by vintagers, and one
Sate there, a female Shape upon an ivory throne,

XLIV.

A Form most like the imagined habitant
Of silver exhalations sprung from dawn,
By winds which feed on sunrise woven, to inchant
The faiths of men: all mortal eyes were drawn,
As famished mariners thro' strange seas gone
Gaze on a burning watch-tower, by the light
Of those divinest lineaments—alone

With thoughts which none could share, from that fair sight
I turned in sickness, for a veil shrouded her countenance bright.

XLV.

And, neither did I hear the acclamations,
Which from brief silence bursting, filled the air
With her strange name and mine, from all the nations
Which we, they said, in strength had gathered there
From the sleep of bondage; nor the vision fair
Of that bright pageantry beheld,—but blind
And silent, as a breathing corpse did fare,
Leaning upon my friend, till like a wind
To fevered cheeks, a voice flowed o'er my troubled mind.

XLVI.

Like music of some minstrel heavenly gifted,
To one whom fiends inthrall, this voice to me;
Scarce did I wish her veil to be uplifted,
I was so calm and joyous.—I could see
The platform where we stood, the statues three
Which kept their marble watch on that high shrine,
The multitudes, the mountains, and the sea;
As when eclipse hath past, things sudden shine
To men's astonished eyes most clear and crystalline.

XLVII.

At first Laone spoke most tremulously:
But soon her voice the calmness which it shed
Gathered, and—"thou art whom I sought to see,
And thou art our first votary here," she said:
"I had a brother once, but he is dead!—
And of all those on the wide earth who breathe,
Thou dost resemble him alone—I spread
This veil between us two, that thou beneath
Shouldst image one who may have been long lost in death.

XLVIII.

"For this wilt thou not henceforth pardon me?
Yes, but those joys which silence well requite
Forbid reply;—why men have chosen me
To be the Priestess of this holiest rite
I scarcely know, but that the floods of light
Which flow over the world, have borne me hither
To meet thee, long most dear; and now unite
Thine hand with mine, and may all comfort wither
From both the hearts whose pulse in joy now beat together,

XLIX.

"If our own will as others' law we bind,
If the foul worship trampled here we fear;
If as ourselves we cease to love our kind!"—
She paused, and pointed upwards—sculptured there
Three shapes around her ivory throne appear;
One was a Giant, like a child asleep
On a loose rock, whose grasp crushed, as it were
In dream, scepters and crowns; and one did keep
Its watchful eyes in doubt whether to smile or weep;

L.

A Woman sitting on the sculptured disk
Of the broad earth, and feeding from one breast
A human babe and a young basilisk;
Her looks were sweet as Heaven's when loveliest
In Autumn eves.—The third Image was drest
In white wings swift as clouds in winter skies,
Beneath his feet, 'mongst ghastliest forms, repress
Lay Faith, an obscene worm, who sought to rise,
While calmly on the Sun he turned his diamond eyes.

LI.

Beside that Image then I sate, while she
Stood, 'mid the throngs which ever ebb'd and flow'd
Like light amid the shadows of the sea
Cast from one cloudless star, and on the crowd
That touch which none who feels forgets, bestowed;
And whilst the sun returned the steadfast gaze
Of the great Image as o'er Heaven it glode,
That rite had place; it ceased when sunset's blaze
Burn'd o'er the isles; all stood in joy and deep amaze,

When in the silence of all spirits there
Laone's voice was felt, and thro' the air
Her thrilling gestures spoke, most eloquently fair.

1.

"Calm art thou as yon sunset! swift and strong
As new-fledged Eagles, beautiful and young,
That float among the blinding beams of morning;
And underneath thy feet writhe Faith, and Folly,
Custom, and Hell, and mortal Melancholy—
Hark! the Earth starts to hear the mighty warning
Of thy voice sublime and holy;
Its free spirits here assembled,
See thee, feel thee, know thee now,—
To thy voice their hearts have trembled
Like ten thousands clouds which flow
With one wide wind as it flies!—
Wisdom! thy irresistible children rise
To hail thee, and the elements they chain
And their own will to swell the glory of thy train.

2.

"O Spirit vast and deep as Night and Heaven!
Mother and soul of all to which is given
The light of life, the loveliness of being,
Lo! thou dost re-ascend the human heart,
Thy throne of power, almighty as thou wert,
In dreams of Poets old grown pale by seeing
The shade of thee:—now, millions start
To feel thy lightnings thro' them burning:
Nature, or God, or Love, or Pleasure,
Or Sympathy the sad tears turning
To mutual smiles, a drainless treasure,
Descends amidst us;—Scorn, and Hate,
Revenge and Selfishness are desolate—
A hundred nations swear that there shall be
Pity and Peace and Love, among the good and free!

3.

"Eldest of things, divine Equality!
Wisdom and Love are but the slaves of thee,
The Angels of thy sway, who pour around thee
Treasures from all the cells of human thought,

And from the Stars, and from the Ocean brought,
And the last living heart whose beatings bound thee:
The powerful and the wise had sought
Thy coming, thou in light descending
O'er the wide land which is thine own
Like the spring whose breath is blending
All blasts of fragrance into one,
Comest upon the paths of men!—
Earth bares her general bosom to thy ken,
And all her children here in glory meet
To feed upon thy smiles, and clasp thy sacred feet.

4.

“My brethren, we are free! the plains and mountains,
The grey sea shore, the forests and the fountains,
Are haunts of happiest dwellers;—man and woman,
Their common bondage burst, may freely borrow
From lawless love a solace for their sorrow;
For oft we still must weep, since we are human.
A stormy night's serenest morrow,
Whose showers are pity's gentle tears,
Whose clouds are smiles of those that die
Like infants without hopes or fears,
And whose beams are joys that lie
In blended hearts, now holds dominion;
The dawn of mind, which upwards on a pinion
Borne, swift as sun-rise, far illumines space,
And clasps this barren world in its own bright embrace!

5.

“My brethren, we are free! the fruits are glowing
Beneath the stars, and the night winds are flowing
O'er the ripe corn, the birds and beasts are dreaming—
Never again may blood of bird or beast
Stain with its venomous stream a human feast,
To the pure skies in accusation steaming.
Avenging poisons shall have ceased
To feed disease and fear and madness,
The dwellers of the earth and air
Shall throng around our steps in gladness
Seeking their food or refuge there.
Our toil from thought all glorious forms shall cull,

To make this Earth, our home, more beautiful,
 And Science, and her sister Poesy,
 Shall clothe in light the fields and cities of the free!

6.

"Victory, Victory to the prostrate nations!
 Bear witness Night, and ye mute Constellations
 Who gaze on us from your crystalline cars!
 Thoughts have gone forth whose powers can sleep no more!
 Victory! Victory! Earth's remotest shore,
 Regions which groan beneath the Antarctic stars,
 The green lands cradled in the roar
 Of western waves, and wildernesses
 Peopled and vast, which skirt the oceans
 Where morning dyes her golden tresses,
 Shall soon partake our high emotions:
 Kings shall turn pale! Almighty Fear
 The Fiend-God, when our charmed name he hear,
 Shall fade like shadow from his thousand fanes,
 While Truth with Joy enthroned o'er his lost empire reigns!"

LII.

Ere she had ceased, the mists of night intertwining
 Their dim woof, floated o'er the infinite throng;
 She, like a spirit thro' the darkness shining,
 In tones whose sweetness silence did prolong,
 As if to lingering winds they did belong,
 Poured forth her inmost soul: a passionate speech
 With wild and thrilling pauses woven among,
 Which whoso heard, was mute, for it could teach
 To rapture like her own all listening hearts to reach.

LIII.

Her voice was as a mountain stream which sweeps
 The withered leaves of Autumn to the lake,
 And in some deep and narrow bay then sleeps
 In the shadow of the shores; as dead leaves wake
 Under the wave, in flowers and herbs which make
 Those green depths beautiful when skies are blue,
 The multitude so moveless did partake
 Such living change, and kindling murmurs flew
 As o'er that speechless calm delight and wonder grew.

LIV.

Over the plain the throngs were scattered then
In groups around the fires, which from the sea
Even to the gorge of the first mountain glen
Blazed wide and far: the banquet of the free
Was spread beneath many a dark cypress tree,
Beneath whose spires, which swayed in the red light,
Reclining as they ate, of Liberty,
And Hope, and Justice, and Laone's name,
Earth's children did a woof of happy converse frame.

LV.

Their feast was such as Earth, the general mother,
Pours from her fairest bosom, when she smiles
In the embrace of Autumn;—to each other
As when some parent fondly reconciles
Her warring children, she their wrath beguiles
With her own sustenance; they relenting weep:
Such was this Festival, which from their isles
And continents, and winds, and oceans deep,
All shapes might throng to share, that fly, or walk, or creep.

LVI.

Might share in peace and innocence, for gore
Or poison none this festal did pollute,
But piled on high, an overflowing store
Of pomegranates, and citrons, fairest fruit,
Melons, and dates, and figs, and many a root
Sweet and sustaining, and bright grapes ere yet
Accursèd fire their mild juice could transmute
Into a mortal bane, and brown corn set
In baskets; with pure streams their thirsting lips they wet.

LVII.

Laone had descended from the shrine,
And every deepest look and holiest mind
Fed on her form, though now those tones divine
Were silent as she past; she did unwind
Her veil, as with the crowds of her own kind
She mixed; some impulse made my heart refrain
From seeking her that night, so I reclined
Amidst a group, where on the utmost plain
A festal watchfire burned beside the dusky main.

LVIII.

And joyous was our feast; pathetic talk,
And wit, and harmony of choral strains,
While far Orion o'er the waves did walk
That flow among the isles, held us in chains
Of sweet captivity, which none disdains
Who feels: but when his zone grew dim in mist
Which clothes the Ocean's bosom, o'er the plains
The multitudes went homeward, to their rest,
Which that delightful day with its own shadow blest.

Canto Sixth.

I.

BESIDE the dimness of the glimmering sea,
Weaving swift language from impassioned themes,
With that dear friend I lingered, who to me
So late had been restored, beneath the gleams
Of the silver stars; and ever in soft dreams
Of future love and peace sweet converse lapt
Our willing fancies, till the pallid beams
Of the last watchfire fell, and darkness wrapt
The waves, and each bright chain of floating fire was snapt,

II.

And till we came even to the City's wall
And the great gate, then, none knew whence or why,
Disquiet on the multitudes did fall:
And first, one pale and breathless past us by,
And stared and spoke not;—then with piercing cry
A troop of wild-eyed women, by the shrieks
Of their own terror driven,—tumultuously
Hither and thither hurrying with pale cheeks,
Each one from fear unknown a sudden refuge seeks—

III.

Then, rallying cries of treason and of danger
Resounded: and—"they come! to arms! to arms!
The Tyrant is amongst us, and the stranger
Comes to enslave us in his name! to arms!"
In vain: for Panic, the pale fiend who charms
Strength to forswear her right, those millions swept
Like waves before the tempest—these alarms
Came to me, as to know their cause I leapt
On the gate's turret, and in rage and grief and scorn I wept!

IV.

For to the North I saw the town on fire,
And its red light made morning pallid now,
Which burst over wide Asia;—louder, higher,
The yells of victory and the screams of woe
I heard approach, and saw the throng below
Stream through the gates like foam-wrought waterfalls
Fed from a thousand storms—the fearful glow
Of bombs flares overhead—at intervals
The red artillery's bolt mangling among them falls.

V.

And now the horsemen come—and all was done
Swifter than I have spoken—I beheld
Their red swords flash in the unrisen sun.
I rushed among the rout to have repelled
That miserable flight—one moment quelled
By voice, and looks, and eloquent despair,
As if reproach from their own hearts withheld
Their steps, they stood; but soon came pouring there
New multitudes, and did those rallied bands o'erbear.

VI.

I strove, as drifted on some cataract
By irresistible streams, some wretch might strive
Who hears its fatal roar:—the files compact
Whelmed me, and from the gate availed to drive
With quickening impulse, as each bolt did rive
Their ranks with bloodier chasm:—into the plain
Disgorged at length the dead and the alive
In one dread mass, were parted, and the stain
Of blood, from mortal steel fell o'er the fields like rain.

VII.

For now the despot's blood-hounds with their prey,
Unarmed and unaware, were gorging deep
Their gluttony of death; the loose array
Of horsemen o'er the wide fields murdering sweep,
And with loud laughter for their tyrant reap
A harvest sown with other hopes, the while,
Far overhead, ships from Propontis keep
A killing rain of fire:—when the waves smile,
As sudden earthquakes light many a volcano isle,

VIII.

Thus sudden, unexpected feast was spread
For the carrion fowls of Heaven.—I saw the sight—
I moved—I lived—as o'er the heaps of dead,
Whose stony eyes glared in the morning light,
I trod;—to me there came no thought of flight,
But with loud cries of scorn which whoso heard
That dreaded death, felt in his veins the might
Of virtuous shame return, the crowd I stirred,
And desperation's hope in many hearts recurred.

IX.

A band of brothers gathering round me, made,
Although unarmed, a steadfast front, and still
Retreating, with stern looks beneath the shade
Of gathered eyebrows, did the victors fill
With doubt even in success; deliberate will
Inspired our growing troop, not overthrown
It gained the shelter of a grassy hill,
And ever still our comrades were hewn down,
And their defenceless limbs beneath our footsteps strown.

X.

Immovably we stood—in joy I found,
Beside me then, firm as a giant pine
Among the mountain vapours driven around,
The old man whom I loved—his eyes divine
With a mild look of courage answered mine,
And my young friend was near, and ardently
His hand grasped mine a moment—now the line
Of war extended, to our rallying cry
As myriads flocked in love and brotherhood to die.

XI.

For ever while the sun was climbing Heaven
The horseman hewed our unarmed myriads down
Safely, tho' when by thirst of carnage driven
Too near, those slaves were swiftly overthrown
By hundreds leaping on them:—flesh and bone
Soon made our ghastly ramparts; then the shaft
Of the artillery from the sea was thrown
More fast and fiery, and the conquerors laughed
In pride to hear the wind our screams of torment waft.

XII.

For on one side alone the hill gave shelter,
So vast that phalanx of unconquered men,
And there the living in the blood did welter
Of the dead and dying, which, in that green glen,
Like stifled torrents, made a plashy fen
Under the feet—thus was the butchery waged
While the sun clomb Heaven's eastern steep—but when
It 'gan to sink—a fiercer combat raged,
For in more doubtful strife the armies were engaged.

XIII.

Within a cave upon the hill were found
A bundle of rude pikes, the instrument
Of those who war but on their native ground
For natural rights: a shout of joyance sent
Even from our hearts the wide air pierced and rent,
As those few arms the bravest and the best
Seized, and each sixth, thus armed, did now present
A line which covered and sustained the rest,
A confident phalanx, which the foes on every side invest.

XIV.

That onset turned the foes to flight almost;
But soon they saw their present strength, and knew
That coming night would to our resolute host
Bring victory, so dismounting close they drew
Their glittering files, and then the combat grew
Unequal but most horrible;—and ever
Our myriads, whom the swift bolt overthrew,
Or the red sword, failed like a mountain river
Which rushes forth in foam to sink in sands forever.

XV.

Sorrow and shame, to see with their own kind
Our human brethren mix, like beasts of blood
To mutual ruin armed by one behind
Who sits and scoffs!—That friend so mild and good,
Who like its shadow near my youth had stood,
Was stabbed!—my old preserver's hoary hair
With the flesh clinging to its roots, was strewed
Under my feet!—I lost all sense or care,
And like the rest I grew desperate and unaware.

XVI.

The battle became ghastlier—in the midst
I paused, and saw how ugly and how fell,
O Hate! thou art, even when thy life thou shed'st
For love. The ground in many a little dell
Was broken, up and down whose steeps befell
Alternate victory and defeat, and there
The combatants with rage most horrible
Strove, and their eyes started with cracking stare,
And impotent their tongues they lolled into the air,

XVII.

Flaccid and foamy, like a mad dog's hanging;
Want, and Moon-madness, and the pest's swift Bane
When its shafts smite—while yet its bow is twanging—
Have each their mark and sign—some ghastly stain;
And this was thine, O War! of hate and pain
Thou loathèd slave. I saw all shapes of death
And ministered to many, o'er the plain
While carnage in the sun-beam's warmth did seethe,
Till twilight o'er the east wove her serenest wreath.

XVIII.

The few who yet survived, resolute and firm
Around me fought. At the decline of day
Winding above the mountain's snowy term
New banners shone: they quivered in the ray
Of the sun's unseen orb—ere night the array
Of fresh troops hemmed us in—of those brave bands
I soon survived alone—and now I lay
Vanquished and faint, the grasp of bloody hands
I felt, and saw on high the glare of falling brands:

XIX.

When on my foes a sudden terror came,
And they fled, scattering—lo! with reinless speed
A black Tartarian horse of giant frame
Comes trampling over the dead, the living bleed
Beneath the hoofs of that tremendous steed,
On which, like to an Angel, robed in white,
Sate one waving a sword;—the hosts recede
And fly, as thro' their ranks with awful might,
Sweeps in the shadow of eve that Phantom swift and bright;

XX.

And its path made a solitude.—I rose
And marked its coming: it relaxed its course
As it approached me, and the wind that flows
Thro' night, bore accents to mine ear whose force
Might create smiles in death—the Tartar horse
Paused, and I saw the shape its might which swayed,
And heard her musical pants, like the sweet source
Of waters in the desert, as she said,
“Mount with me Laon, now”—I rapidly obeyed.

XXI.

Then: “Away! away!” she cried, and stretched her sword
As 'twere a scourge over the courser's head,
And lightly shook the reins:—We spake no word
But like the vapour of the tempest fled
Over the plain; her dark hair was dispread
Like the pine's locks upon the lingering blast;
Over mine eyes its shadowy strings it spread
Fitfully, and the hills and streams fled fast,
As o'er their glimmering forms the steed's broad shadow past.

XXII.

And his hoofs ground the rocks to fire and dust,
His strong sides made the torrents rise in spray,
And turbulence, as of a whirlwind's gust
Surrounded us;—and still away! away!
Thro' the desert night we sped, while she alway
Gazed on a mountain which we neared, whose crest
Crowned with a marble ruin, in the ray
Of the obscure stars gleamed;—its rugged breast
The steed strained up, and then his impulse did arrest.

XXIII.

A rocky hill which overhung the Ocean:—
 From that lone ruin, when the steed that panted
 Paused, might be heard the murmur of the motion
 Of waters, as in spots forever haunted
 By the choicest winds of Heaven, which are enchanted
 To music, by the wand of Solitude,
 That wizard wild, and the far tents implanted
 Upon the plain, be seen by those who stood
 Thence marking the dark shore of Ocean's curvèd flood.

XXIV.

One moment these were heard and seen—another
 Past; and the two who stood beneath that night,
 Each only heard, or saw, or felt the other;
 As from the lofty steed she did alight,
 Cythna, (for, from the eyes whose deepest light
 Of love and sadness made my lips feel pale
 With influence strange of mournfullest delight,
 My own sweet sister looked), with joy did quail,
 And felt her strength in tears of human weakness fail.

XXV.

And, for a space in my embrace she rested,
 Her head on my unquiet heart reposing,
 While my faint arms her languid frame invested:
 At length she looked on me, and half unclosing
 Her tremulous lips, said: "Friend, thy bands were losing
 The battle, as I stood before the King
 In bonds.—I burst them then, and swiftly choosing
 The time, did seize a Tartar's sword, and spring
 Upon his horse, and swift as on the whirlwind's wing,

XXVI.

"Have thou and I been borne beyond pursuer,
 And we are here."—Then turning to the steed,
 She pressed the white moon on his front with pure
 And rose-like lips, and many a fragrant weed
 From the green ruin plucked, that he might feed;—
 But I to a stone seat that Maiden led,
 And kissing her fair eyes, said, "Thou hast need
 Of rest," and I heaped up the courser's bed
 In a green mossy nook, with mountain flowers dispread.

XXVII.

Within that ruin, where a shattered portal
Looks to the eastern stars, abandoned now
By man, to be the home of things immortal,
Memories, like awful ghosts which come and go,
And must inherit all he builds below,
When he is gone, a hall stood; o'er whose roof
Fair clinging weeds with ivy pale did grow,
Clasping its grey rents with a verdurous woof,
A hanging dome of leaves, a canopy moon-proof.

XXVIII.

The autumnal winds, as if spell-bound, had made
A natural couch of leaves in that recess,
Which seasons none disturbed, but in the shade
Of flowering parasites, did Spring love to dress
With their sweet blooms the wintry loneliness
Of those dead leaves, shedding their stars, when'er
The wandering wind her nurslings might caress;
Whose intertwining fingers ever there,
Made music wild and soft that filled the listening air.

XXIX.

We know not where we go, or what sweet dream
May pilot us thro' caverns strange and fair
Of far and pathless passion, while the stream
Of life, our bark doth on its whirlpools bear,
Spreading swift wings as sails to the dim air;
Nor should we seek to know, so the devotion
Of love and gentle thoughts be heard still there
Louder and louder from the utmost Ocean
Of universal life, attuning its commotion.

XXX.

To the pure all things are pure! Oblivion wrapt
Our spirits, and the fearful overthrow
Of public hope was from our being snapt,
Tho' link'd years had bound it there; for now
A power, a thirst, a knowledge, which below
All thoughts, like light beyond the atmosphere,
Clothing its clouds with grace, doth ever flow,
Came on us, as we sate in silence there,
Beneath the golden stars of the clear azure air.

XXXI.

In silence which doth follow talk that causes
The baffled heart to speak with sighs and tears,
When wildering passion swalloweth up the pauses
Of inexpressive speech:—the youthful years
Which we together past, their hopes and fears,
The common blood which ran within our frames,
That likeness of the features which endears
The thoughts expressed by them, our very names,
And all the wingèd hours which speechless memory claims,

XXXII.

Had found a voice:—and ere that voice did pass,
The night grew damp and dim, and thro' a rent
Of the ruin where we sate, from the morass,
A wandering Meteor by some wild wind sent,
Hung high in the green dome, to which it lent
A faint and pallid lustre; while the song
Of blasts, in which its blue hair quivering bent,
Strewed strangest sounds the moving leaves among;
A wondrous light, the sound as of a spirit's tongue.

XXXIII.

The Meteor shewed the leaves on which we sate,
And Cythna's glowing arms, and the thick ties
Of her soft hair which bent with gathered weight
My neck near hers, her dark and deepening eyes,
Which, as twin phantoms of one star that lies
O'er a dim well, move, though the star reposes,
Swam in our mute and liquid ecstasies,
Her marble brow, and eager lips, like roses,
With their own fragrance pale, which spring but half uncloses.

XXXIV.

The meteor to its far morass returned:
The beating of our veins one interval
Made still; and then I felt the blood that burned
Within her frame, mingle with mine, and fall
Around my heart like fire; and over all
A mist was spread, the sickness of a deep
And speechless swoon of joy, as might befall
Two disunited spirits when they leap
In union from this earth's obscure and fading sleep.

XXXV.

Was it one moment that confounded thus
All thought, all sense, all feeling, into one
Unutterable power, which shielded us
Even from our own cold looks, when we had gone
Into a wide and wild oblivion
Of tumult and of tenderness? or now
Had ages, such as make the moon and sun,
The seasons, and mankind their changes know,
Left fear and time unfelt by us alone below?

XXXVI.

I know not. What are kisses whose fire clasps
The failing heart in languishment, or limb
Twined within limb? or the quick dying gasps
Of the life meeting, when the faint eyes swim
Thro' tears of a wide mist boundless and dim,
In one caress? What is the strong controul
Which leads the heart that dizzy steep to climb,
Where far over the world those vapours roll
Which blend two restless frames in one reposing soul?

XXXVII.

It is the shadow which doth float unseen,
But not unfelt, o'er blind mortality,
Whose divine darkness fled not, from that green
And lone recess, where lapt in peace did lie
Our linked frames; till, from the changing sky,
That night and still another day had fled;
And then I saw and felt. The moon was high,
And clouds, as of a coming storm, were spread
Under its orb,—loud winds were gathering overhead.

XXXVIII.

Cythna's sweet lips seemed lurid in the moon,
Her fairest limbs with the night wind were chill,
And her dark tresses were all loosely strewn
O'er her pale bosom:—all within was still,
And the sweet peace of joy did almost fill
The depth of her unfathomable look;—
And we sate calmly, though that rocky hill,
The waves contending in its caverns strook,
For they foreknew the storm, and the grey ruin shook

XXXIX.

There we unheeding sate, in the communion
 Of interchangèd vows, which, with a rite
 Of faith most sweet and sacred, stamped our union.—
 Few were the living hearts which could unite
 Like ours, or celebrate a bridal night
 With such close sympathies, for to each other
 Had high and solemn hopes, the gentle might
 Of earliest love, and all the thoughts which smother
 Cold Evil's power, now linked a sister and a brother.

XL.

And such is Nature's modesty, that those
 Who grow together cannot choose but love,
 If faith or custom do not interpose,
 Or common slavery mar what else might move
 All gentlest thoughts; as in the sacred grove
 Which shades the springs of Æthiopian Nile,
 That living tree, which, if the arrowy dove
 Strike with her shadow, shrinks in fear awhile,
 But its own kindred leaves clasps while the sun-beams smile;

XLI.

And clings to them, when darkness may dissever
 The close caresses of all duller plants
 Which bloom on the wide earth—thus we forever
 Were linked, for love had nurst us in the haunts
 Where knowledge, from its secret source enchants
 Young hearts with the fresh music of its springing,
 Ere yet its gathered flood feeds human wants
 As the great Nile feeds Egypt; ever flinging
 Light on the woven boughs which o'er its waves are swinging.

XLII.

The tones of Cythna's voice like echoes were
 Of those far murmuring streams; they rose and fell,
 Mixed with mine own in the tempestuous air,—
 And so we sate, until our talk befell
 Of the late ruin, swift and horrible,
 And how those seeds of hope might yet be sown,
 Whose fruit is Evil's mortal poison: well,
 For us, this ruin made a watch-tower lone,
 But Cythna's eyes looked faint, and now two days were gone

XLIII.

Since she had food:—therefore I did awaken
The Tartar steed, who, from his ebon mane,
Soon as the clinging slumbers he had shaken,
Bent his thin head to seek the brazen rein,
Following me obediently; with pain
Of heart, so deep and dread, that one caress,
When lips and heart refuse to part again,
Till they have told their fill, could scarce express
The anguish of her mute and fearful tenderness,

XLIV.

Cythna beheld me part, as I bestrode
That willing steed—the tempest and the night,
Which gave my path its safety as I rode
Down the ravine of rocks, did soon unite
The darkness and the tumult of their might
Borne on all winds.—Far thro' the streaming rain
Floating at intervals the garments white
Of Cythna gleamed, and her voice once again
Came to me on the gust, and soon I reached the plain.

XLV.

I dreaded not the tempest, nor did he
Who bore me, but his eyeballs wide and red
Turned on the lightning's cleft exultingly;
And when the earth beneath his tameless tread,
Shook with the sullen thunder, he would spread
His nostrils to the blast, and joyously
Mock the fierce peal with neighings;—thus we sped
O'er the lit plain, and soon I could descry
Where Death and Fire had gorged the spoil of victory.

XLVI.

There was a desolate village in a wood
Whose bloom-inwoven leaves now scattering fed
The hungry storm; it was a place of blood,
A heap of hearthless walls;—the flames were dead
Within those dwellings now,—the life had fled
From all those corpses now,—but the wide sky
Flooded with lightning was ribbed overhead
By the black rafters, and around did lie
Women, and babes, and men, slaughtered confusedly.

XLVII.

Beside the fountain in the market-place
Dismounting, I beheld those corpses stare
With horny eyes upon each other's face,
And on the earth and on the vacant air,
And upon me, close to the waters where
I stooped to slake my thirst;—I shrank to taste,
For the salt bitterness of blood was there;
But tied the steed beside, and sought in haste
If any yet survived amid that ghastly waste.

XLVIII.

No living thing was there beside one woman,
Whom I found wandering in the streets, and she
Was withered from a likeness of aught human
Into a fiend, by some strange misery:
Soon as she heard my steps she leaped on me,
And glued her burning lips to mine, and laughed
With a loud, long, and frantic laugh of glee,
And cried, "Now Mortal, thou hast deeply quaffed
The Plague's blue kisses—soon millions shall pledge the
draught!

XLIX.

"My name is Pestilence—this bosom dry,
Once fed two babes—a sister and a brother—
When I came home, one in the blood did lie
Of three death-wounds—the flames had ate the other!
Since then I have no longer been a mother,
But I am Pestilence;—hither and thither
I flit about, that I may slay and smother:—
All lips which I have kissed must surely wither,
But Death's—if thou art he, we'll go to work together!

L.

"What seek'st thou here? the moonlight comes in flashes,—
The dew is rising dankly from the dell—
'Twill moisten her! and thou shalt see the gashes
In my sweet boy, now full of worms—but tell
First what thou seek'st."—"I seek for food."—"Tis well,
Thou shalt have food; Famine, my paramour,
Waits for us at the feast—cruel and fell
Is Famine, but he drives not from his door
Those whom these lips have kissed, alone. No more, no more!"

LI.

As thus she spake, she grasped me with the strength
Of madness, and by many a ruined hearth
She led, and over many a corpse:—at length
We came to a lone hut, where on the earth
Which made its floor; she in her ghastly mirth
Gathering from all those homes now desolate,
Had piled three heaps of loaves, making a dearth
Among the dead—round which she set in state
A ring of cold, stiff babes; silent and stark they sate.

LII.

She leaped upon a pile, and lifted high
Her mad looks to the lightning, and cried: "Eat!
Share the great feast—to-morrow we must die!"
And then she spurned the loaves with her pale feet,
Towards her bloodless guests;—that sight to meet,
Mine eyes and my heart ached, and but that she
Who loved me, did with absent looks defeat
Despair, I might have raved in sympathy;
But now I took the food that woman offered me;

LIII.

And vainly having with her madness striven
If I might win her to return with me,
Departed. In the eastern beams of Heaven
The lightning now grew pallid—rapidly,
As by the shore of the tempestuous sea
The dark steed bore me, and the mountain grey
Soon echoed to his hoofs, and I could see
Cythna among the rocks, where she alway
Had sate, with anxious eyes fixed on the lingering day.

LIV.

And joy was ours to meet: she was most pale,
Famished, and wet and weary, so I cast
My arms around her, lest her steps should fail
As to our home we went, and thus embraced,
Her full heart seemed a deeper joy to taste
Than e'er the prosperous know; the steed behind
Trod peacefully along the mountain waste,
We reached our home ere morning could unbind
Night's latest veil, and on our bridal couch reclined.

LV.

Her chilled heart having cherished in my bosom,
 And sweetest kisses past, we two did share
 Our peaceful meal:—as an autumnal blossom
 Which spreads its shrunk leaves in the sunny air,
 After cold showers, like rainbows woven there,
 Thus in her lips and cheeks the vital spirit
 Mantled, and in her eyes, an atmosphere
 Of health, and hope; and sorrow languished near it,
 And fear, and all that dark despondence doth inherit.

Canto Seventh.

I.

So we sate joyous as the morning ray
 Which fed upon the wrecks of night and storm
 Now lingering on the winds; light airs did play
 Among the dewy weeds, the sun was warm,
 And we sate linked in the inwoven charm
 Of converse and caresses sweet and deep,
 Speechless caresses, talk that might disarm
 Time, tho' he wield the darts of death and sleep,
 And those thrice mortal barbs in his own poison steep.

II.

I told her of my sufferings and my madness,
 And how, awakened from that dreamy mood
 By Liberty's uprise, the strength of gladness
 Came to my spirit in my solitude;
 And all that now I was, while tears pursued
 Each other down her fair and listening cheek
 Fast as the thoughts which fed them, like a flood
 From sunbright dales; and when I ceased to speak,
 Her accents soft and sweet the pausing air did wake.

III.

She told me a strange tale of strange endurance,
Like broken memories of many a heart
Woven into one; to which no firm assurance,
So wild were they, could her own faith impart.
She said that not a tear did dare to start
From the swoln brain, and that her thoughts were firm
When from all mortal hope she did depart,
Borne by those slaves across the Ocean's term,
And that she reached the port without one fear infirm.

IV.

One was she among many there, the thralls
Of the cold Tyrant's cruel lust: and they
Laughed mournfully in those polluted halls;
But she was calm and sad, musing alway
On loftiest enterprise, till on a day
The Tyrant heard her singing to her lute
A wild, and sad, and spirit-thrilling lay,
Like winds that die in wastes—one moment mute
The evil thoughts it made, which did his breast pollute.

V.

Even when he saw her wondrous loveliness,
One moment to great Nature's sacred power
He bent, and was no longer passionless;
But when he bade her to his secret bower
Be borne, a loveless victim, and she tore
Her locks in agony, and her words of flame
And mightier looks availed not; then he bore
Again his load of slavery, and became
A king, a heartless beast, a pageant and a name.

VI.

She told me what a loathsome agony
Is that when selfishness mocks love's delight,
Foul as in dream's most fearful imagery
To dally with the mowing dead—that night
All torture, fear, or horror made seem light
Which the soul dreams or knows, and when the day
Shone on her awful frenzy, from the sight
Where like a Spirit in fleshly chains she lay
Struggling, aghast and pale the Tyrant fled away.

VII.

Her madness was a beam of light, a power
 Which dawned thro' the rent soul; and words it gave
 Gestures and looks, such as in whirlwinds bore
 Which might not be withstood, whence none could save
 All who approached their sphere, like some calm wave
 Vexed into whirlpools by the chasms beneath;
 And sympathy made each attendant slave
 Fearless and free, and they began to breathe
 Deep curses, like the voice of flames far underneath.

VIII.

The King felt pale upon his noonday throne:
 At night two slaves he to her chamber sent,
 One was a green and wrinkled eunuch, grown
 From human shape into an instrument
 Of all things ill—distorted, bowed and bent.
 The other was a wretch from infancy
 Made dumb by poison; who nought knew or meant
 But to obey: from the fire-isles came he,
 A diver lean and strong, of Oman's coral sea.

IX.

They bore her to a bark, and the swift stroke
 Of silent rowers clove the blue moonlight seas,
 Until upon their path the morning broke;
 They anchored then, where, be there calm or breeze,
 The gloomiest of the drear Symplegades
 Shakes with the sleepless surge;—the Æthiop there
 Wound his long arms around her, and with knees
 Like iron clasped her feet, and plunged with her
 Among the closing waves out of the boundless air.

X.

"Swift as an eagle stooping from the plain
 Of morning light, into some shadowy wood,
 He plunged thro' the green silence of the main,
 Thro' many a cavern which the eternal flood
 Had scooped, as dark lairs for its monster brood;
 And among mighty shapes which fled in wonder,
 And among mightier shadows which pursued
 His heels, he wound: until the dark rocks under
 He touched a golden chain—a sound arose like thunder.

XI.

"A stunning clang of massive bolts redoubling
Beneath the deep—a burst of waters driven
As from the roots of the sea, raging and bubbling:
And in that roof of crags a space was riven
Thro' which there shone the emerald beams of heaven,
Shot thro' the lines of many waves inwoven,
Like sunlight thro' acacia woods at even,
Thro' which, his way the diver having cloven,
Past like a spark sent up out of a burning oven.

XII.

"And then," she said, "he laid me in a cave
Above the waters, by that chasm of sea,
A fountain round and vast, in which the wave
Imprisoned, boiled and leaped perpetually,
Down which, one moment resting, he did flee,
Winning the adverse depth; that spacious cell
Like an hupaithric temple wide and high,
Whose aëry dome is inaccessible,
Was pierced with one round cleft thro' which the sun-beams
fell.

XIII.

"Below, the fountain's brink was richly paven
With the deep's wealth, coral, and pearl, and sand
Like spangling gold, and purple shells engraven
With mystic legends by no mortal hand,
Left there, when thronging to the moon's command,
The gathering waves rent the Hesperian gate
Of mountains, and on such bright floor did stand
Columns, and shapes like statues, and the state
Of kingless thrones, which Earth did in her heart create.

XIV.

"The fiend of madness, which had made its prey
Of my poor heart, was lulled to sleep awhile:
There was an interval of many a day,
And a sea-eagle brought me food the while,
Whose nest was built in that untrodden isle,
And who, to be the jailor had been taught,
Of that strange dungeon; as a friend whose smile
Like light and rest at morn and even is sought,
That wild bird was to me, till madness misery brought.

XV.

"The misery of a madness slow and creeping,
Which made the earth seem fire, the sea seem air,
And the white clouds of noon which oft were sleeping,
In the blue heaven so beautiful and fair,
Like hosts of ghastly shadows hovering there;
And the sea-eagle looked a fiend, who bore
Thy mangled limbs for food!—thus all things were
Transformed into the agony which I wore
Even as a poisoned robe around my bosom's core.

XVI.

"Again I knew the day and night fast fleeing,
The eagle, and the fountain, and the air;
Another frenzy came—there seemed a being
Within me—a strange load my heart did bear,
As if some living thing had made its lair
Even in the fountains of my life:—a long
And wondrous vision wrought from my despair,
Then grew, like sweet reality among
Dim visionary woes, an unrepousing throng.

XVII.

"Methought I was about to be a mother—
Month after month went by, and still I dreamed
That we should soon be all to one another,
I and my child; and still new pulses seemed
To beat beside my heart, and still I deemed
There was a babe within—and when the rain
Of winter thro' the rifted cavern streamed,
Methought, after a lapse of lingering pain,
I saw that lovely shape, which near my heart had lain.

XVIII.

"It was a babe, beautiful from its birth,—
It was like thee, dear love, its eyes were thine,
Its brow, its lips, and so upon the earth
It laid its fingers, as now rest on mine
Thine own beloved:—'twas a dream divine;
Even to remember how it fled, how swift,
How utterly, might make the heart repine,—
Tho' 'twas a dream."—Then Cythna did uplift
Her looks on mine, as if some doubt she sought to shift:

XIX.

A doubt which would not flee, a tenderness
Of questioning grief, a source of thronging tears;
Which, having past, as one whom sobs oppress,
She spoke: "Yes, in the wilderness of years
Her memory, aye, like a green home appears,
She sucked her fill even at this breast, sweet love,
For many months. I had no mortal fears;
Methought I felt her lips and breath approve,—
It was a human thing which to my bosom clove.

XX.

"I watched the dawn of her first smiles, and soon
When zenith-stars were trembling on the wave,
Or when the beams of the invisible moon,
Or sun, from many a prism within the cave
Their gem-born shadows to the water gave,
Her looks would hunt them, and with outspread hand
From the swift lights which might that fountain pave,
She would mark one, and laugh, when that command
Slighting, it lingered there, and could not understand.

XXI.

"Methought her looks began to talk with me;
And no articulate sounds, but something sweet
Her lips would frame,—so sweet, it could not be
That it was meaningless; her touch would meet
Mine, and our pulses calmly flow and beat
In response while we slept; and on a day
When I was happiest in that strange retreat,
With heaps of golden shells we two did play,—
Both infants, weaving wings for time's perpetual way.

XXII.

"Ere night, methought, her waning eyes were grown
Weary with joy, and tired with our delight,
We, on the earth, like sister twins lay down
On one fair mother's bosom:—from that night
She fled;—like those illusions clear and bright,
Which dwell in lakes, when the red moon on high
Pause ere it wakens tempest;—and her flight,
Tho' 'twas the death of brainless phantasy,
Yet smote my lonesome heart more than all misery.

XXIII.

"It seemed that in the dreary night, the diver
 Who brought me thither, came again, and bore
 My child away. I saw the waters quiver,
 When he so swiftly sunk, as once before:
 Then morning came—it shone even as of yore,
 But I was changed—the very life was gone
 Out of my heart—I wasted more and more,
 Day after day, and sitting there alone,
 Vexed the inconstant waves with my perpetual moan.

XXIV.

"I was no longer mad, and yet methought
 My breasts were swoln and changed:—in every vein
 The blood stood still one moment, while that thought
 Was passing—with a gush of sickening pain
 It ebbed even to its withered springs again:
 When my wan eyes in stern resolve I turned
 From that most strange delusion, which would fain
 Have waked the dream for which my spirit yearned
 With more than human love,—then left it unreturned.

XXV.

"So now my reason was restored to me,
 I struggled with that dream, which, like a beast
 Most fierce and beauteous, in my memory
 Had made its lair, and on my heart did feast;
 But all that cave and all its shapes possest
 By thoughts which could not fade, renewed each one
 Some smile, some look, some gesture which had blest
 Me heretofore: I, sitting there alone,
 Vexed the inconstant waves with my perpetual moan.

XXVI.

"Time past, I know not whether months or years;
 For day, nor night, nor change of seasons made
 Its note, but thoughts and unavailing tears:
 And I became at last even as a shade,
 A smoke, a cloud on which the winds have preyed,
 Till it be thin as air; until, one even,
 A Nautilus upon the fountain played,
 Spreading his azure sail where breath of Heaven
 Descended not, among the waves and whirlpools driven.

XXVII.

"And when the Eagle came, that lovely thing,
Oaring with rosy feet its silver boat,
Fled near me as for shelter; on slow wing,
The Eagle, hovering o'er his prey did float;
But when he saw that I with fear did note
His purpose, proffering my own food to him,
The eager plumes subsided on his throat—
He came where that bright child of sea did swim,
And o'er it cast in peace his shadow broad and dim.

XXVIII.

"This wakened me, it gave me human strength,
And hope, I know not whence or wherefore, rose,
But I resumed my ancient powers at length;
My spirit felt again like one of those
Like thine, whose fate it is to make the woes
Of humankind their prey—what was this cave?
Its deep foundation no firm purpose knows
Immutable, resistless, strong to save,
Like mind while yet it mocks the all-devouring grave.

XXIX.

"And where was Laon? might my heart be dead,
While that far dearer heart could move and be?
Or whilst over the earth the pall was spread,
Which I had sworn to rend? I might be free,
Could I but win that friendly bird to me,
To bring me ropes; and long in vain I sought
By intercourse of mutual imagery
Of objects, if such aid he could be taught;
But fruit, and flowers, and boughs, yet never ropes he brought.

XXX.

"We live in our own world, and mine was made
From glorious phantasies of hope departed:
Aye, we are darkened with their floating shade,
Or cast a lustre on them—time imparted
Such power to me, I became fearless-hearted,
My eye and voice grew firm, calm was my mind,
And piercing, like the morn, now it has darted
Its lustre on all hidden things, behind
Yon dim and fading clouds which load the weary wind.

XXXI.

"My mind became the book through which I grew
 Wise in all human wisdom, and its cave,
 Which like a mine I rifled through and through,
 To me the keeping of its secrets gave—
 One mind, the type of all, the moveless wave
 Whose calm reflects all moving things that are,
 Necessity, and love, and life, the grave,
 And sympathy, fountains of hope and fear;
 Justice, and truth, and time, and the world's natural sphere.

XXXII.

"And on the sand would I make signs to range
 These woofs, as they were woven, of my thought;
 Clear, elemental shapes, whose smallest change
 A subtler language within language wrought:
 The key of truths which once were dimly taught
 In old Crotona;—and sweet melodies
 Of love, in that lorn solitude I caught
 From mine own voice in dream, when thy dear eyes
 Shone thro' my sleep, and did that utterance harmonize.

XXXIII.

"Thy songs were winds whereon I fled at will,
 As in a wingèd chariot, o'er the plain
 Of crystal youth; and thou wert there to fill
 My heart with joy, and there we sate again
 On the grey margin of the glimmering main,
 Happy as then but wiser far, for we
 Smiled on the flowery grave in which were lain
 Fear, Faith, and Slavery; and mankind was free,
 Equal, and pure and wise, in wisdom's prophecy.

XXXIV.

"For to my will my fancies were as slaves
 To do their sweet and subtile ministries;
 And oft from that bright fountain's shadowy waves
 They would make human throngs gather and rise
 To combat with my overflowing eyes,
 And voice made deep with passion—thus I grew
 Familiar with the shock and the surprise
 And war of earthly minds, from which I drew
 The power which has been mine to frame their thoughts anew,

XXXV.

“And thus my prison was the populous earth—
Where I saw—even as misery dreams of morn
Before the east has given its glory birth—
Religion’s pomp made desolate by the scorn
Of Wisdom’s faintest smile, and thrones uptorn,
And dwellings of mild people interspersed
With undivided fields of ripening corn,
And love made free,—a hope which we have nurst
Even with our blood and tears,—until its glory burst.

XXXVI.

“All is not lost! there is some recompense
For hope whose fountain can be thus profound,
Even throned Evil’s splendid impotence,
Girt by its hell of power, the secret sound
Of hymns to truth and freedom—the dread bound
Of life and death past fearlessly and well,
Dungeons wherein the high resolve is found,
Racks which degraded woman’s greatness tell,
And what may else be good and irresistible.

XXXVII.

“Such are the thoughts which, like the fires that flare
In storm-encompassed isles, we cherish yet
In this dark ruin—such were mine even there;
As in its sleep some odorous violet,
While yet its leaves with nightly dews are wet,
Breathes in prophetic dreams of day’s uprise,
Or, as ere Scythian frost in fear has met
Spring’s messengers descending from the skies,
The buds foreknow their life—this hope must ever rise.

XXXVIII.

“So years had past, when sudden earthquake rent
The depth of ocean and the cavern crackt
With sound, as if the world’s wide continent
Had fallen in universal ruin wrackt;
And thro’ the cleft streamed in one cataract,
The stifling waters:—when I woke, the flood
Whose banded waves that crystal cave had sacked
Was ebbing round me, and my bright abode
Before me yawned—a chasm desert, and bare, and broad.

XXXIX.

"Above me was the sky, beneath the sea:
 I stood upon a point of shattered stone,
 And heard loose rocks rushing tumultuously
 With splash and shock into the deep—anon
 All ceased, and there was silence wide and lone.
 I felt that I was free! the Ocean-spray
 Quivered beneath my feet, the broad Heaven shone
 Around, and in my hair the winds did play
 Lingering as they pursued their unimpeded way.

XL.

"My spirit moved upon the sea like wind
 Which round some thymy cape will lag and hover,
 Tho' it can wake the still cloud, and unbind
 The strength of tempest: day was almost over,
 When thro' the fading light I could discover
 A ship approaching—its white sails were fed
 With the north wind—its moving shade did cover
 The twilight deep;—the mariners in dread
 Cast anchor when they saw new rocks around them spread.

XLI.

"And when they saw one sitting on a crag,
 They sent a boat to me;—the sailors rowed
 In awe thro' many a new and fearful jag
 Of overhanging rock, thro' which there flowed
 The foam of streams that cannot make abode.
 They came and questioned me, but when they heard
 My voice, they became silent, and they stood
 And moved as men in whom new love had stirred
 Deep thoughts: so to the ship we past without a word.

Canto Eighth.

I.

"I SATE beside the steersman then, and gazing
Upon the west, cried, 'Spread the sails! behold!
The sinking moon is like a watch-tower blazing
Over the mountains yet;—the City of Gold
Yon Cape alone does from the sight withhold;
The stream is fleet—the north breathes steadily
Beneath the stars, they tremble with the cold!
Ye cannot rest upon the dreary sea!—
Haste, haste to the warm home of happier destiny!"

II.

"The Mariners obeyed—the Captain stood
Aloof, and whispering to the Pilot, said,
'Alas, alas! I fear we are pursued
By wicked ghosts: a Phantom of the Dead,
The night before we sailed, came to my bed
In dream, like that!'—The Pilot then replied,
'It cannot be—she is a human Maid—
Her low voice makes you weep—she is some bride,
Or daughter of high birth—she can be nought beside."

III.

"We past the islets, borne by wind and stream,
And as we sailed, the Mariners came near
And thronged around to listen;—in the gleam
Of the pale moon I stood, as one whom fear
May not attain, and my calm voice did rear;
'Ye all are human—yon broad moon gives light
To millions who the self-same likeness wear,
Even while I speak—beneath this very night,
Their thoughts flow on like ours, in sadness or delight,

IV.

“‘What dream ye? Your own hands have built an home,
 Even for yourselves on a belovèd shore:
 For some, fond eyes are pining till they come,
 How they will greet him when his toils are o’er,
 And laughing babes rush from the well-known door!
 Is this your care? ye toil for your own good—
 Ye feel and think—has some immortal power
 Such purposes? or in a human mood,
 Dream ye that God thus builds for man in solitude?

V.

“‘What then is God? ye mock yourselves, and give
 A human heart to what ye cannot know:
 As if the cause of life could think and live!
 ’Twere as if man’s own works should feel, and shew
 The hopes, and fears, and thoughts from which they flow,
 And he be like to them. Lo! Plague is free
 To waste, Blight, Poison, Earthquake, Hail, and Snow,
 Disease, and Want, and worse Necessity
 Of hate and ill, and Pride, and Fear, and Tyranny.

VI.

“‘What then is God? Some moon-struck sophist stood
 Watching the shade from his own soul upthrown
 Fill Heaven and darken Earth, and in such mood
 The Form he saw and worshipped was his own,
 His likeness in the world’s vast mirror shewn;
 And ’twere an innocent dream, but that a faith
 Nursed by fear’s dew of poison, grows thereon,
 And that men say, God has appointed Death
 On all who scorn his will to wreak immortal wrath.

VII.

“‘Men say they have seen God, and heard from God,
 Or known from others who have known such things,
 And that his will is all our law, a rod
 To scourge us into slaves—that Priests and Kings,
 Custom, domestic sway, aye, all that brings
 Man’s free-born soul beneath the oppressor’s heel,
 Are his strong ministers, and that the stings
 Of death will make the wise his vengeance feel,
 Tho’ truth and virtue arm their hearts with tenfold steel,

VIII.

“‘And it is said, that God will punish wrong;
Yes, add despair to crime, and pain to pain!
And his red hell’s undying snakes among
Will bind the wretch on whom he fixed a stain,
Which, like a plague, a burthen, and a bane,
Clung to him while he lived;—for love and hate,
Virtue and vice, they say, are difference vain—
The will of strength is right—this human state
Tyrants, that they may rule, with lies thus desolate.

IX.

“‘Alas, what strength? opinion is more frail
Than yon dim cloud now fading on the moon
Even while we gaze, tho’ it awhile avail
To hide the orb of truth—and every throne
Of Earth or Heaven, tho’ shadow, rests thereon,
One shape of many names:—for this ye plough
The barren waves of ocean, hence each one
Is slave or tyrant; all betray and bow,
Command, or kill, or fear, or wreak, or suffer woe.

X.

“‘Its names are each a sign which maketh holy
All power—aye, the ghost, the dream, the shade
Of power,—lust, falsehood, hate, and pride, and folly;
The pattern whence all fraud and wrong is made,
A law to which mankind has been betrayed;
And human love, is as the name well known
Of a dear mother, whom the murderer laid
In bloody grave, and into darkness thrown,
Gathered her wildered babes around him as his own.

XI.

“‘O Love! who to the hearts of wandering men
Art as the calm to Ocean’s weary waves!
Justice, or truth, or joy! those only can
From slavery and religion’s labyrinth caves
Guide us, as one clear star the seaman saves,
To give to all an equal share of good,
To track the steps of Freedom tho’ thro’ graves
She pass, to suffer all in patient mood,
To weep for crime tho’ stained with thy friend’s dearest blood.

XII.

“‘To feel the peace of self-contentment’s lot,
 To own all sympathies, and outrage none,
 And in the inmost bowers of sense and thought,
 Until life’s sunny day is quite gone down,
 To sit and smile with Joy, or, not alone,
 To kiss salt tears from the worn cheek of Woe;
 To live, as if to love and live were one,—
 This is not faith or law, nor those who bow
 To thrones on Heaven or Earth, such destiny may know.

XIII.

“‘But children near their parents tremble now,
 Because they must obey—one rules another,
 For it is said God rules both high and low,
 And man is made the captive of his brother,
 And Hate is throned on high with Fear his mother,
 Above the Highest—and those fountain-cells,
 Whence love yet flowed when faith had choked all other,
 Are darkened—Woman, as the bond-slave, dwells
 Of man, a slave; and life is poisoned in its wells.

XIV.

“‘Man seeks for gold in mines, that he may weave
 A lasting chain for his own slavery;—
 In fear and restless care that he may live
 He toils for others, who must ever be
 The joyless thralls of like captivity;
 He murders, for his chiefs delight in ruin;
 He builds the altar, that its idol’s fee
 May be his very blood; he is pursuing
 O, blind and willing wretch! his own obscure undoing.

XV.

“‘Woman!—she is his slave, she has become
 A thing I weep to speak—the child of scorn,
 The outcast of a desolated home,
 Falsehood, and fear, and toil, like waves have worn
 Channels upon her cheek, which smiles adorn,
 As calm decks the false Ocean:—well ye know
 What Woman is, for none of Woman born,
 Can choose but drain the bitter dregs of woe,
 Which ever from the oppressed to the oppressors flow.

XVI.

“‘This need not be; ye might arise, and will
That gold should lose its power, and thrones their glory;
That love, which none may bind, be free to fill
The world, like light; and evil faith, grown hoary
With crime, be quenched and die.—Yon promontory
Even now eclipses the descending moon!—
Dungeons and palaces are transitory—
High temples fade like vapour—Man alone
Remains, whose will has power when all beside is gone.

XVII.

“‘Let all be free and equal!—from your hearts
I feel an echo; thro’ my inmost frame
Like sweetest sound, seeking its mate, it darts—
Whence come ye, friends? alas, I cannot name
All that I read of sorrow, toil, and shame,
On your worn faces; as in legends old
Which make immortal the disastrous fame
Of conquerors and impostors false and bold,
The discord of your hearts, I in your looks behold.

XVIII.

“‘Whence come ye, friends? from pouring human blood
Forth on the earth? or bring ye steel and gold,
That Kings may dupe and slay the multitude?
Or from the famished poor, pale, weak, and cold,
Bear ye the earnings of their toil? unfold!
Speak! are your hands in slaughter’s sanguine hue
Stained freshly? have your hearts in guile grown old?
Know yourselves thus! ye shall be pure as dew,
And I will be a friend and sister unto you.

XIX.

“‘Disguise it not—we have one human heart—
All mortal thoughts confess a common home:
Blush not for what may to thyself impart
Stains of inevitable crime: the doom
Is this, which has, or may, or must become
Thine, and all humankind’s. Ye are the spoil
Which Time thus marks for the devouring tomb,
Thou and thy thoughts and they, and all the toil
Wherewith ye twine the rings of life’s perpetual coil.

XX.

“Disguise it not—ye blush for what ye hate,
 And Enmity is sister unto Shame;
 Look on your mind—it is the book of fate—
 Ah! it is dark with many a blazoned name
 Of misery—all are mirrors of the same;
 But the dark fiend who with his iron pen
 Dipped in scorn’s fiery poison, makes his fame
 Enduring there, would o’er the heads of men
 Pass harmless, if they scorned to make their hearts his den.

XXI.

“Yes, it is Hate, that shapeless fiendly thing
 Of many names, all evil, some divine,
 Whom self-contempt arms with a mortal sting;
 Which, when the heart it’s snaky folds intwine
 Is wasted quite, and when it doth repine
 To gorge such bitter prey, on all beside
 It turns with ninefold rage, as with its twine
 When Amphisbæna some fair bird has tied,
 Soon o’er the putrid mass he threats on every side.

XXII.

“Reproach not thine own soul, but know thyself,
 Nor hate another’s crime, nor loathe thine own.
 It is the dark idolatry of self,
 Which, when our thoughts and actions once are gone,
 Demands that man should weep, and bleed, and groan;
 O vacant expiation! be at rest.—
 The past is Death’s, the future is thine own;
 And love and joy can make the foulest breast
 A paradise of flowers, where peace might build her nest.

XXIII.

“Speak thou! whence come ye?’—A Youth made reply,
 ‘Wearily, wearily o’er the boundless deep
 We sail;—thou readest well the misery
 Told in these faded eyes, but much doth sleep
 Within, which there the poor heart loves to keep,
 Or dare not write on the dishonoured brow;
 Even from our childhood have we learned to steep
 The bread of slavery in the tears of woe,
 And never dreamed of hope or refuge until now.

XXIV.

“‘Yes—I must speak—my secret should have perished
Even with the heart it wasted, as a brand
Fades in the dying flame whose life it cherished,
But that no human bosom can withstand
Thee, wondrous Lady, and the mild command
Of thy keen eyes:—yes, we are wretched slaves,
Who from their wonted loves and native land
Are reft, and bear o’er the dividing waves
The unregarded prey of calm and happy graves.

XXV.

“‘We drag afar from pastoral vales the fairest
Among the daughters of those mountains lone,
We drag them there, where all things best and rarest
Are stained and trampled:—years have come and gone
Since, like the ship which bears me, I have known
No thought;—but now the eyes of one dear Maid
On mine with light of mutual love have shone—
She is my life,—I am but as the shade
Of her,—a smoke sent up from ashes, soon to fade.

XXVI.

“‘For she must perish in the Tyrant’s hall—
Alas, alas!’—He ceased, and by the sail
Sate cowering—but his sobs were heard by all,
And still before the ocean and the gale
The ship fled fast till the stars ’gan to fail,
And round me gathered with mute countenance,
The Seamen gazed, the Pilot, worn and pale
With toil, the Captain with grey locks, whose glance
Met mine in restless awe—they stood as in a trance.

XXVII.

“‘Recede not! pause not now! thou art grown old,
But Hope will make thee young, for Hope and Youth
Are children of one mother, even Love—behold!
The eternal stars gaze on us!—is the truth
Within your soul? care for your own, or ruth
For others’ sufferings? do ye thirst to bear
A heart which not the serpent Custom’s tooth
May violate?—be free! and even here,
Swear to be firm till death!’ they cried, ‘We swear! we
swear!’

XXVIII.

"The very darkness shook, as with a blast
 Of subterranean thunder at the cry;
 The hollow shore its thousand echoes cast
 Into the night, as if the sea, and sky,
 And earth, rejoiced with new-born liberty,
 For in that name they swore! Bolts were undrawn,
 And on the deck, with unaccustomed eye
 The captives gazing stood, and every one
 Shrank as the inconstant torch upon her countenance shone.

XXIX.

"They were earth's purest children, young and fair,
 With eyes the shrines of unawakened thought,
 And brows as bright as spring or morning, ere
 Dark time had there its evil legend wrought
 In characters of cloud which wither not.—
 The change was like a dream to them; but soon
 They knew the glory of their altered lot,
 In the bright wisdom of youth's breathless noon,
 Sweet talk, and smiles, and sighs, all bosoms did attune.

XXX.

"But one was mute, her cheeks and lips most fair,
 Changing their hue like lilies newly blown,
 Beneath a bright acacia's shadowy hair,
 Waved by the wind amid the sunny noon,
 Shewed that her soul was quivering; and full soon
 That Youth arose, and breathlessly did look
 On her and me, as for some speechless boon:
 I smiled, and both their hands in mine I took,
 And felt a soft delight from what their spirits shook.

Canto Ninth.

I.

"THAT night we anchored in a woody bay,
And sleep no more around us dared to hover
Than, when all doubt and fear has past away,
It shades the couch of some unresting lover,
Whose heart is now at rest: thus night past over
In mutual joy:—around, a forest grew
Of poplars and dark oaks, whose shade did cover
The waning stars pranked in the waters blue,
And trembled in the wind which from the morning flew.

II.

"The joyous mariners, and each free maiden,
Now brought from the deep forest many a bough,
With woodland spoil most innocently laden;
Soon wreathes of budding foliage seemed to flow
Over the mast and sails, the stern and prow
Were canopied with blooming boughs,—the while
On the slant sun's path o'er the waves we go
Rejoicing, like the dwellers of an isle
Doomed to pursue those waves that cannot cease to smile.

III.

"The many ships spotting the dark blue deep
With snowy sails, fled fast as our's came nigh,
In fear and wonder; and on every steep
Thousands did gaze, they heard the startling cry,
Like earth's own voice lifted unconquerably
To all her children, the unbounded mirth,
The glorious joy of thy name—Liberty!
They heard!—As o'er the mountains of the earth
From peak to peak leap on the beams of morning's birth:

IV.

"So from that cry over the boundless hills,
Sudden was caught one universal sound,
Like a volcano's voice, whose thunder fills
Remotest skies,—such glorious madness found
A path thro' human hearts with stream which drowned
Its struggling fears and cares, dark Custom's brood,
They knew not whence it came, but felt around
A wide contagion poured—they called aloud
On Liberty—that name lived on the sunny flood.

V.

"We reached the port—alas! from many spirits
The wisdom which had waked that cry, was fled,
Like the brief glory which dark Heaven inherits
From the false dawn, which fades ere it is spread,
Upon the night's devouring darkness shed:
Yet soon bright day will burst—even like a chasm
Of fire, to burn the shrouds outworn and dead,
Which wrap the world; a wide enthusiasm,
To cleanse the fevered world as with an earthquake's spasm!

VI.

"I walked thro' the great City then, but free
From shame or fear; those toil-worn Mariners
And happy Maidens did encompass me;
And like a subterranean wind that stirs
Some forest among caves, the hopes and fears
From every human soul, a murmur strange
Made as I past; and many wept, with tears
Of joy and awe, and winged thoughts did range,
And half-extinguished words, which prophesied of change.

VII.

"For, with strong speech I tore the veil that hid
Nature, and Truth, and Liberty, and Love,—
As one who from some mountain's pyramid,
Points to the unrisen sun!—the shades approve
His truth, and flee from every stream and grove.
Thus, gentle thoughts did many a bosom fill,—
Wisdom, the mail of tried affections wove
For many a heart, and tameless scorn of ill,
Thrice steeped in molten steel the unconquerable will.

VIII.

"Some said I was a maniac wild and lost;
Some, that I scarce had risen from the grave
The Prophet's virgin bride, a heavenly ghost:—
Some said, I was a fiend from my weird cave,
Who had stolen human shape, and o'er the wave,
The forest, and the mountain came;—some said
I was the child of God, sent down to save
Women from bonds and death, and on my head
The burthen of their sins would frightfully be laid.

IX.

"But soon my human words found sympathy
In human hearts: the purest and the best,
As friend with friend made common cause with me,
And they were few, but resolute;—the rest,
Ere yet success the enterprise had blest,
Leagued with me in their hearts;—their meals, their slumber,
Their hourly occupations were possest
By hopes which I had armed to overnumber
Those hosts of meaner cares, which life's strong wings
encumber.

X.

"But chiefly women, whom my voice did waken
From their cold, careless, willing slavery,
Sought me: one truth their dreary prison has shaken,—
They looked around, and lo! they became free!
Their many tyrants sitting desolately
In slave-deserted halls, could none restrain;
For wrath's red fire had withered in the eye,
Whose lightning once was death,—nor fear, nor gain
Could tempt one captive now to lock another's chain.

XI.

"Those who were sent to bind me, wept, and felt
Their minds outsoar the bonds which clasped them round,
Even as a waxen shape may waste and melt
In the white furnace; and a visioned swoond,
A pause of hope and awe the City bound,
Which, like the silence of a tempest's birth,
When in its awful shadow it has wound
The sun, the wind, the ocean, and the earth,
Hung terrible, ere yet the lightnings have leapt forth.

XII.

"Like clouds inwoven in the silent sky,
By winds from distant regions meeting there,
In the high name of truth and liberty,
Around the City millions gathered were,
By hopes which sprang from many a hidden lair,
Words, which the lore of truth in hues of flame
Arrayed, thine own wild songs which in the air
Like homeless odours floated, and the name
Of thee, and many a tongue which thou hadst dipped in flame.

XIII.

"The Tyrant knew his power was gone, but Fear,
The nurse of Vengeance, bade him wait the event—
That perfidy and custom, gold and prayer,
And whatsoe'er, when force is impotent,
To fraud the scepter of the world has lent,
Might, as he judged, confirm his failing sway.
Therefore throughout the streets, the Priests he sent
To curse the rebels.—To their God did they
For Earthquake, Plague, and Want, kneel in the public way.

XIV.

"And grave and hoary men were bribed to tell
From seats where law is made the slave of wrong,
How glorious Athens in her splendour fell,
Because her sons were free,—and that among
Mankind, the many to the few belong,
By God, and Nature, and Necessity.
They said, that age was truth, and that the young
Marred with wild hopes the peace of slavery,
With which old times and men had quelled the vain and free.

XV.

"And with the falsehood of their poisonous lips
They breathed on the enduring memory
Of sages and of bards a brief eclipse;
There was one teacher, who, necessity
Had armed, with strength and wrong against mankind,
His slave and his avenger aye to be;
That we were weak and sinful, frail and blind,
And that the will of one was peace, and we
Should seek for nought on earth but toil and misery.

XVI.

“‘For thus we might avoid the hell hereafter.’
So spake the hypocrites, who cursed and lied;
Alas, their sway was past, and tears and laughter
Clung to their hoary hair, withering the pride
Which in their hollow hearts dared still abide;
And yet obscener slaves with smother brow,
And sneers on their strait lips, thin, blue and wide,
Said, that the rule of men was over now,
And hence, the subject world to woman’s will must bow.

XVII.

“And gold was scattered thro’ the streets, and wine
Flowed at a hundred feasts within the wall.
In vain! the steady towers in Heaven did shine
As they were wont, nor at the priestly call,
Left Plague her banquet in the Æthiop’s hall,
Nor Famine from the rich man’s portal came,
Where at her ease she ever preys on all
Who throng to kneel for food: nor fear nor shame,
Nor faith, nor discord, dimmed hope’s newly kindled flame.

XVIII.

“For gold was as a God whose faith began
To fade, so that its worshippers were few,
And Hell and Awe, which in the heart of man
Is God itself; the Priests its downfall knew,
As day by day their altars lonelier grew,
Till they were left alone within the fane;
The shafts of falsehood unpolluting flew,
And the cold sneers of calumny were vain,
The union of the free with discord’s brand to stain.

XIX.

“The rest thou knowest—Lo! we two are here—
We have survived a ruin wide and deep—
Strange thoughts are mine—I cannot grieve or fear.
Sitting with thee upon this lonely steep
I smile, tho’ human love should make me weep,
We have survived a joy that knows no sorrow,
And I do feel a mighty calmness creep
Over my heart, which can no longer borrow
Its hues from chance or change, dark children of to-morrow.

XX.

"We know not what will come—yet Laon, dearest,
Cythna shall be the prophetess of Love,
Her lips shall rob thee of the grace thou wearest,
To hide thy heart, and clothe the shapes which rove
Within the homeless Future's wintry grove;
For I now, sitting thus beside thee, seem
Even with thy breath and blood to live and move,
And violence and wrong are as a dream
Which rolls from steadfast truth an unreturning stream.

XXI.

"The blasts of Autumn drive the wingèd seeds
Over the earth,—next come the snows, and rain,
And frosts, and storms, which dreary Winter leads
Out of his Scythian cave, a savage train;
Behold! Spring sweeps over the world again,
Shedding soft dews from her ætherial wings;
Flowers on the mountains, fruits over the plain,
And music on the waves and woods she flings,
And love on all that lives, and calm on lifeless things.

XXII.

"O Spring, of hope, and love, and youth, and gladness
Wind-wingèd emblem! brightest, best and fairest!
Whence comest thou, when, with dark Winter's sadness
The tears that fade in sunny smiles thou sharest?
Sister of joy, thou art the child who wearest
Thy mother's dying smile, tender and sweet;
Thy mother Autumn, for whose grave thou bearest
Fresh flowers, and beams like flowers, with gentle feet,
Disturbing not the leaves which are her winding-sheet.

XXIII.

"Virtue, and Hope, and Love, like light and Heaven,
Surround the world.—We are their chosen slaves.
Has not the whirlwind of our spirit driven
Truth's deathless germs to thought's remotest caves?
Lo, Winter comes!—the grief of many graves,
The frost of death, the tempest of the sword,
The flood of tyranny, whose sanguine waves
Stagnate like ice at Faith, the inchanter's word,
And bind all human hearts in it's repose abhorred.

XXIV.

"The seeds are sleeping in the soil: meanwhile
The Tyrant peoples dungeons with his prey,
Pale victims on the guarded scaffold smile
Because they cannot speak; and, day by day,
The moon of wasting Science wanes away
Among her stars, and in that darkness vast
The sons of earth to their foul idols pray,
And grey Priests triumph, and like blight or blast
A shade of selfish care o'er human looks is cast.

XXV.

"This is the winter of the world;—and here
We die, even as the winds of Autumn fade,
Expiring in the frore and foggy air.—
Behold! Spring comes, tho' we must pass, who made
The promise of its birth,—even as the shade
Which from our death, as from a mountain, flings
The future, a broad sunrise; thus arrayed
As with the plumes of overshadowing wings,
From its dark gulph of chains, Earth like an eagle springs.

XXVI.

"O dearest love! we shall be dead and cold
Before this morn may on the world arise;
Wouldst thou the glory of its dawn behold?
Alas! gaze not on me, but turn thine eyes
On thine own heart—it is a Paradise
Which everlasting spring has made its own,
And while drear winter fills the naked skies,
Sweet streams of sunny thought, and flowers fresh blown,
Are there, and weave their sounds and odours into one.

XXVII.

"In their own hearts the earnest of the hope
Which made them great, the good will ever find;
And tho' some envious shade may interlope
Between the effect and it,—One comes behind,
Who aye the future to the past will bind—
Necessity, whose sightless strength forever
Evil with evil, good with good must wind
In bands of union, which no power may sever:
They must bring forth their kind, and be divided never!

XXVIII.

"The good and mighty of departed ages
 Are in their graves, the innocent and free,
 Heroes, and Poets, and prevailing Sages,
 Who leave the vesture of their majesty
 To adorn and clothe this naked world;—and we
 Are like to them—such perish, but they leave
 All hope, or love, or truth, or liberty,
 Whose forms their mighty spirits could conceive
 To be a rule and law to ages that survive.

XXIX.

"So be the turf heaped over our remains
 Even in our happy youth, and that strange lot,
 Whate'er it be, when in these mingling veins
 The blood is still, be ours; let sense and thought
 Pass from our being, or be numbered not
 Among the things that are; let those who come
 Behind, for whom our steadfast will has bought
 A calm inheritance, a glorious doom,
 Insult with careless tread, our undivided tomb.

XXX.

"Our many thoughts and deeds, our life and love,
 Our happiness, and all that we have been,
 Immortally must live, and burn and move,
 When we shall be no more;—the world has seen
 A type of peace; and as some most serene
 And lovely spot to a poor maniac's eye,
 After long years, some sweet and moving scene
 Of youthful hope returning suddenly,
 Quells his long madness—thus man shall remember thee.

XXXI.

"And Calumny meanwhile shall feed on us,
 As worms devour the dead, and near the throne
 And at the altar, most accepted thus
 Shall sneers and curses be;—what we have done
 None shall dare vouch, tho' it be truly known;
 That record shall remain, when they must pass
 Who built their pride in its oblivion;
 And fame, in human hope which sculptured was,
 Survive the perished scrolls of unending brass.

XXXII.

"The while we two, belovèd, must depart,
And Sense and Reason, those inchanters fair,
Whose wand of power is hope, would bid the heart
That gazed beyond the wormy grave despair:
These eyes, these lips, this blood, seems darkly there
To fade in hideous ruin; no calm sleep
Peopling with golden dreams the stagnant air,
Seems our obscure and rotting eyes to steep
In joy;—but senseless death—a ruin dark and deep!

XXXIII.

"These are blind fancies—reason cannot know
What sense can neither feel, nor thought conceive;
There is delusion in the world—and woe,
And fear, and pain—we know not whence we live,
Or why, or how, or what mute Power may give
Their being to each plant, and star, and beast,
Or even these thoughts:—Come near me! I do weave
A chain I cannot break—I am possest
With thoughts too swift and strong for one lone human
breast.

XXXIV.

"Yes, yes—thy kiss is sweet, thy lips are warm—
O! willingly, belovèd, would these eyes,
Might they no more drink being from thy form,
Even as to sleep whence we again arise,
Close their faint orbs in death: I fear nor prize
Aught that can now betide, unshared by thee—
Yes, Love when Wisdom fails makes Cythna wise:
Darkness and death, if death be true, must be
Dearer than life and hope, if unenjoyed with thee.

XXXV.

"Alas, our thoughts flow on with stream, whose waters
Return not to their fountain—Earth and Heaven,
The Ocean and the Sun, the clouds their daughters,
Winter, and Spring, and Morn, and Noon, and Even,
All that we are or know, is darkly driven
Towards one gulph—Lo! what a change is come
Since I first spake—but time shall be forgiven,
Tho' it change all but thee!"—She ceased, night's gloom
Meanwhile had fallen on earth from the sky's sunless dome.

XXXVI.

Tho' she had ceased, her countenance uplifted
 To Heaven, still spake, with solemn glory bright;
 Her dark deep eyes, her lips, whose motions gifted
 The air they breathed with love, her locks undight;
 "Fair star of life and love," I cried, "my soul's delight,
 Why lookest thou on the crystalline skies?
 O, that my spirit were yon Heaven of night,
 Which gazes on thee with its thousand eyes!"
 She turned to me and smiled—that smile was Paradise!

Canto Tenth.

I.

WAS there a human spirit in the steed,
 That thus with his proud voice, ere night was gone,
 He broke our linkèd rest? or do indeed
 All living things a common nature own,
 And thought erect an universal throne,
 Where many shapes one tribute ever bear?
 And Earth, their mutual mother, does she groan
 To see her sons contend? and makes she bare
 Her breast, that all in peace its drainless stores may share?

II.

I have heard friendly sounds from many a tongue,
 Which was not human—the lone Nightingale
 Has answered me with her most soothing song,
 Out of her ivy bower, when I sate pale
 With grief, and sighed beneath; from many a dale
 The Antelopes who flocked for food have spoken
 With happy sounds, and motions, that avail
 Like man's own speech; and such was now the token
 Of waning night, whose calm by that proud neigh was broken.

III.

Each night, that mighty steed bore me abroad,
And I returned with food to our retreat,
And dark intelligence; the blood which flowed
Over the fields, had stained the courser's feet;—
Soon the dust drinks that bitter dew,—then meet
The vulture, and the wild-dog, and the snake,
The wolf, and the hyæna grey, and eat
The dead in horrid truce: their throngs did make
Behind the steed, a chasm like waves in a ship's wake.

IV.

For, from the utmost realms of earth, came pouring
The banded slaves whom every despot sent
At that throned traitor's summons; like the roaring
Of fire, whose floods the wild deer circumvent
In the scorched pastures of the South; so bent
The armies of the leaguèd kings around
Their files of steel and flame;—the continent
Trembled, as with a zone of ruin bound,
Beneath their feet, the sea shook with their Navies' sound.

V.

From every nation of the earth they came,
The multitude of moving heartless things,
Whom slaves call men: obediently they came,
Like sheep whom from the fold the shepherd brings
To the stall, red with blood; their many kings
Led them, thus erring, from their native land;
Tartar and Frank, and millions whom the wings
Of Indian breezes lull, and many a band
The Arctic Anarch sent, and Idumea's sand,

VI.

Fertile in prodigies and lies;—so there
Strange natures made a brotherhood of ill.
The desert savage ceased to grasp in fear
His Asian shield and bow, when, at the will
Of Europe's subtler son, the bolt would kill
Some shepherd sitting on a rock secure;
But smiles of wondering joy his face would fill,
And savage sympathy: those slaves impure,
Each one the other thus from ill to ill did lure.

VII.

For traitorously did that foul Tyrant robe
 His countenance in lies,—even at the hour
 When he was snatched from death, then o'er the globe
 With secret signs from many a mountain tower,
 With smoke by day, and fire by night, the power
 Of Kings and Priests, those dark conspirators
 He called:—they knew his cause their own, and swore
 Like wolves and serpents, to their mutual wars
 Strange truce, with many a rite which Earth and Heaven abhors.

VIII.

Myriads had come—millions were on their way;
 The Tyrant past, surrounded by the steel
 Of hired assassins, thro' the public way,
 Choked with his country's dead:—his footsteps reel
 On the fresh blood—he smiles, “Aye, now I feel
 I am a King in truth!” he said, and took
 His royal seat, and bade the torturing wheel
 Be brought, and fire, and pincers, and the hook,
 And scorpions; that his soul on its revenge might look.

IX.

“But first, go slay the rebels—why return
 The victor bands,” he said, “millions yet live,
 Of whom the weakest with one word might turn
 The scales of victory yet;—let none survive
 But those within the walls—each fifth shall give
 The expiation for his brethren here.—
 Go forth, and waste and kill!”—“O king, forgive
 My speech,” a soldier answered—“but we fear
 The spirits of the night, and morn is drawing near;

X.

“For we were slaying still without remorse,
 And now that dreadful chief beneath my hand
 Defenceless lay, when, on a hell-black horse,
 An Angel bright as day, waving a brand
 Which flashed among the stars, past.”—“Dost thou stand
 Parleying with me, thou wretch?” the king replied;
 “Slaves, bind him to the wheel; and of this band,
 Whoso will drag that woman to his side
 That scared him thus, may burn his dearest foe beside;

XI.

"And gold and glory shall be his.—Go forth!"
They rushed into the plain.—Loud was the roar
Of their career: the horsemen shook the earth;
The wheeled artillery's speed the pavement tore;
The infantry, file after file did pour
Their clouds on the utmost hills. Five days they slew
Among the wasted fields: the sixth saw gore
Stream thro' the city; on the seventh, the dew
Of slaughter became stiff; and there was peace anew:

XII.

Peace in the desert fields and villages,
Between the glutted beasts and mangled dead!
Peace in the silent streets! save when the cries
Of victims to their fiery judgment led,
Made pale their voiceless lips who seemed to dread
Even in their dearest kindred, lest some tongue
Be faithless to the fear yet unbetrayed;
Peace in the Tyrant's palace, where the throng
Waste the triumphal hours in festival and song!

XIII.

Day after day the burning Sun rolled on
Over the death-polluted land—it came
Out of the east like fire, and fiercely shone
A lamp of Autumn, ripening with its flame
The few lone ears of corn;—the sky became
Stagnate with heat, so that each cloud and blast
Languished and died,—the thirsting air did claim
All moisture, and a rotting vapour past
From the unburied dead, invisible and fast.

XIV.

First Want, then Plague came on the beasts; their food
Failed, and they drew the breath of its decay.
Millions on millions, whom the scent of blood
Had lured, or who, from regions far away,
Had tracked the hosts in festival array,
From their dark deserts; gaunt and wasting now,
Stalked like fell shades among their perished prey;
In their green eyes a strange disease did glow,
They sank in hideous spasm, or pains severe and slow.

XV.

The fish were poisoned in the streams; the birds
 In the green woods perished; the insect race
 Was withered up; the scattered flocks and herds
 Who had survived the wild beasts' hungry chace
 Died moaning, each upon the other's face
 In helpless agony gazing; round the City
 All night, the lean hyænas their sad case
 Like starving infants wailed; a woeful ditty!
 And many a mother wept, pierced with unnatural pity.

XVI.

Amid the aërial minarets on high,
 The Æthiopian vultures fluttering fell
 From their long line of brethren in the sky,
 Startling the concourse of mankind.—Too well
 These signs the coming mischief did foretell:—
 Strange panic first, and a deep sickening dread
 Within each heart, like ice, did sink and dwell,
 A voiceless thought of evil, which did spread
 With the quick glance of eyes, like withering lightnings shed.

XVII.

Day after day, when the year wanes, the frosts
 Strip its green crown of leaves, till all is bare;
 So on those strange and congregated hosts
 Came Famine, a swift shadow, and the air
 Groaned with the burthen of a new despair;
 Famine, than whom Misrule no deadlier daughter
 Feeds from her thousand breasts, tho' sleeping there
 With lidless eyes, lie Faith, and Plague, and Slaughter,
 A ghastly brood; conceived of Lethe's sullen water.

XVIII.

There was no food, the corn was trampled down,
 The flocks and herds had perished; on the shore
 The dead and putrid fish were ever thrown;
 The deeps were foodless, and the winds no more
 Creaked with the weight of birds, but as before
 Those wingèd things sprang forth, were void of shade;
 The vines and orchards, Autumn's golden store,
 Were burned;—so that the meanest food was weighed
 With gold, and Avarice died before the god it made.

XIX.

There was no corn—in the wide market-place
All loathliest things, even human flesh, was sold;
They weighed it in small scales—and many a face
Was fixed in eager horror then: his gold
The miser brought, the tender maid, grown bold
Thro' hunger, bared her scornèd charms in vain;
The mother brought her eldest born, controuled
By instinct blind as love, but turned again
And bade her infant suck, and died in silent pain.

XX.

Then fell blue Plague upon the race of man.
“O, for the sheathèd steel, so late which gave
Oblivion to the dead, when the streets ran
With brothers' blood! O, that the earthquake's grave
Would gape, or Ocean lift its stifling wave!”
Vain cries—throughout the streets, thousands pursued
Each by his fiery torture howl and rave,
Or sit, in frenzy's unimagined mood,
Upon fresh heaps of dead; a ghastly multitude.

XXI.

It was not hunger now, but thirst. Each well
Was choked with rotting corpses, and became
A cauldron of green mist made visible
At sunrise. Thither still the myriads came,
Seeking to quench the agony of the flame,
Which ragèd like poison thro' their bursting veins;
Naked they were from torture, without shame,
Spotted with nameless scars and lurid blains,
Childhood, and youth, and age, writhing in savage pains.

XXII.

It was not thirst but madness! many saw
Their own lean image every where, it went
A ghastlier self beside them, till the awe
Of that dread sight to self-destruction sent
Those shrieking victims; some, ere life was spent,
Sought, with a horrid sympathy, to shed
Contagion on the sound; and others rent
Their matted hair, and cried aloud, “We tread
On fire! Almighty God his hell on earth has spread!”

XXIII.

Sometimes the living by the dead were hid.
Near the great fountain in the public square,
Where corpses made a crumbling pyramid
Under the sun, was heard one stifled prayer
For life, in the hot silence of the air;
And strange 'twas amid that hideous heap to see
Some shrouded in their long and golden hair,
As if not dead, but slumbering quietly
Like forms which sculptors carve, then love to agony.

XXIV.

Famine had spared the palace of the King:—
He rioted in festival the while,
He and his guards and Priests; but Plague did fling
One shadow upon all. Famine can smile
On him who brings it food and pass, with guile
Of thankful falsehood, like a courtier grey,
The house-dog of the throne; but many a mile
Comes Plague, a wingèd wolf, who loathes alway
The garbage and the scum that strangers make her prey.

XXV.

So, near the throne, amid the gorgeous feast,
Sheathed in resplendent arms, or loosely dight
To luxury, ere the mockery yet had ceased
That lingered on his lips, the warrior's might
Was loosened, and a new and ghastrier night
In dreams of frenzy lapped his eyes; he fell
Headlong, or with stiff eyeballs sate upright
Among the guests, or raving mad, did tell
Strange truths; a dying seer of dark oppression's hell.

XXVI.

The Princes and the Priests were pale with terror;
That monstrous faith wherewith they ruled mankind,
Fell, like a shaft loosed by the bowman's error,
On their own hearts: they sought and they could find
No refuge—'twas the blind who led the blind!
So, thro' the desolate streets to the high fane
Of their Almighty God, the armies wind
In sad procession: each among the train
To his own Idol lifts his supplications vain.

XXVII.

"O God!" they cried, "we know our secret pride
Has scorned thee, and thy worship, and thy name;
Secure in human power we have defied
Thy fearful might; we bend in fear and shame
Before thy presence; with the dust we claim
Kindred; be merciful, O King of Heaven!
Most justly have we suffered for thy fame
Made dim, but be at length our sins forgiven,
Ere to despair and death thy worshippers be driven.

XXVIII.

"O God Almighty! thou alone hast power!
Who can resist thy will? who can restrain
Thy wrath, when on the guilty thou dost shower
The shafts of thy revenge, a blistering rain?
Greatest and best, be merciful again!
Have we not stabbed thine enemies, and made
The Earth an altar, and the Heavens a fane,
Where thou wert worshipped with their blood, and laid
Those hearts in dust which would thy searchless works
have weighed?

XXIX.

"Well didst thou loosen on this impious City
Thine angels of revenge: recall them now;
Thy worshippers abased, here kneel for pity,
And bind their souls by an immortal vow:
We swear by thee! and to our oath do thou
Give sanction, from thine hell of fiends and flame,
That we will kill with fire and torments slow,
The last of those who mocked thy holy name,
And scorned the sacred laws thy prophets did proclaim."

XXX.

Thus they with trembling limbs and pallid lips
Worshipped their own hearts' image, dim and vast,
Scared by the shade wherewith they would eclipse
The light of other minds;—troubled they past
From the great Temple;—fiercely still and fast
The arrows of the plague among them fell,
And they on one another gazed aghast,
And thro' the hosts contention wild befell,
As each of his own God the wondrous works did tell.

XXXI.

And Oromaze, and Christ, and Mahomet,
 Moses, and Buddh, Zerdusht, and Brahm, and Foh,
 A tumult of strange names, which never met
 Before, as watchwords of a single woe,
 Arose; each raging votary 'gan to throw
 Aloft his armed hands, and each did howl
 "Our God alone is God!" and slaughter now
 Would have gone forth, when from beneath a cowl
 A voice came forth, which pierced like ice thro' every soul.

XXXII.

He was a Christian Priest from whom it came,
 A zealous man, who led the legioned west
 With words which faith and pride had steeped in flame,
 To quell the rebel Atheists; a dire guest
 Even to his friends was he, for in his breast
 Did hate and guile lie watchful, intertwined,
 Twin serpents in one deep and winding nest;
 He loathed all faith beside his own, and pined
 To wreak his fear of God in vengeance on mankind.

XXXIII.

But more he loathed and hated the clear light
 Of wisdom and free thought, and more did fear,
 Lest, kindled once, its beams might pierce the night,
 Even where his Idol stood; for, far and near
 Did many a heart in Europe leap to hear
 That faith and tyranny were trampled down;
 Many a pale victim, doomed for truth to share
 The murderer's cell, or see, with helpless groan,
 The Priests his children drag for slaves to serve their own.

XXXIV.

He dared not kill the infidels with fire
 Or steel, in Europe: the slow agonies
 Of legal torture mocked his keen desire:
 So he made truce with those who did despise
 His cradled Idol, and the sacrifice
 Of God to God's own wrath,—that Islam's creed
 Might crush for him those deadlier enemies;
 For fear of God did in his bosom breed
 A jealous hate of man, an unreposing need.

XXXV.

"Peace! Peace!" he cried, "when we are dead, the Day
Of Judgment comes, and all shall surely know
Whose God is God, each fearfully shall pay
The errors of his faith in endless woe!
But there is sent a mortal vengeance now
On earth, because an impious race had spurned
Him whom we all adore,—a subtle foe
By whom for ye this dread reward was earned,
And thrones, which rest on faith in God, nigh overturned.

XXXVI.

"Think ye, because ye weep, and kneel, and pray,
That God will lull the pestilence? it rose
Even from beneath his throne, where, many a day
His mercy soothed it to a dark repose:
It walks upon the earth to judge his foes,
And what are thou and I, that he should deign
To curb his ghastly minister, or close
The gates of death, ere they receive the twain
Who shook with mortal spells his undefended reign?

XXXVII.

"Aye, there is famine in the gulph of hell,
Its giant worms of fire for ever yawn,—
Their lurid eyes are on us! those who fell
By the swift shafts of pestilence ere dawn,
Are in their jaws! they hunger for the spawn
Of Satan, their own brethren, who were sent
To make our souls their spoil. See! See! they fawn
Like dogs, and they will sleep with luxury spent,
When those detested hearts their iron fangs have rent!

XXXVIII.

"Our God may then lull Pestilence to sleep:—
Pile high the pyre of expiation now!
A forest's spoil of boughs, and on the heap
Pour venomous gums, which sullenly and slow,
When touched by flame, shall burn, and melt, and flow,
A stream of clinging fire,—and fix on high
A net of iron, and spread forth below
A couch of snakes, and scorpions, and the fry
Of centipedes and worms, earth's hellish progeny!

XXXIX.

"Let Laon and Laone on that pyre,
Linked tight with burning brass, perish! then pray
That, with this sacrifice, the withering ire
Of God may be appeased." He ceased, and they
A space stood silent, as far, far away
The echoes of his voice among them died;
And he knelt down upon the dust, away
Muttering the curses of his speechless pride,
Whilst shame, and fear, and awe, the armies did divide.

XL.

His voice was like a blast that burst the portal
Of fabled hell; and as he spake, each one
Saw gape beneath the chasms of fire immortal,
And Heaven above seemed cloven, where, on a throne
With storms and shadows girt, sate God, alone,
Their King and Judge—fear killed in every breast
All natural pity then, a fear unknown
Before, and with an inward fire possest,
They raged like homeless beasts whom burning woods invest

XLI.

'Twas morn—at noon the public crier went forth,
Proclaiming thro' the living and the dead,
"The Monarch saith, that his great Empire's worth
Is set on Laon and Laone's head:
He who but one yet living here can lead,
Or who the life from both their hearts can wring,
Shall be the kingdom's heir, a glorious meed!
But he who both alive can hither bring,
The Princess shall espouse, and reign an equal King."

XLII.

Ere night the pyre was piled, the net of iron
Was spread above, the fearful couch below,
It overtopped the towers that did environ
That spacious square; for Fear is never slow
To build the thrones of Hate, her mate and foe,
So, she scourged forth the maniac multitude
To rear this pyramid—tottering and slow,
Plague-stricken, foodless, like lean herds pursued
By gad-flies, they have piled the heath, and gums, and wood.

XLIII.

Night came, a starless and a moonless gloom.
Until the dawn, those hosts of many a nation
Stood round that pile, as near one lover's tomb
Two gentle sisters mourn their desolation;
And in the silence of that expectation,
Was heard on high the reptiles' hiss and crawl—
It was so deep, save when the devastation
Of the swift pest with fearful interval,
Marking its path with shrieks, among the crowd would fall

XLIV.

Morn came,—among those sleepless multitudes,
Madness, and Fear, and Plague, and Famine still
Heaped corpse on corpse, as in autumnal woods
The frosts of many a wind with dead leaves fill
Earth's cold and sullen brooks; in silence still,
The pale survivors stood; ere noon, the fear
Of Hell became a panic, which did kill
Like hunger or disease, with whispers drear [is near!"
As "hush! hark! Come they yet? God, God, thine hour

XLV.

And Priests rushed thro' their ranks, some counterfeiting
The rage they did inspire, some mad indeed
With their own lies; they said their God was waiting
To see his enemies writhe, and burn, and bleed,—
And that, till then, the snakes of hell had need
Of human souls:—three hundred furnaces
Soon blazed thro' the wide City, where, with speed,
Men brought their atheist kindred to appease
God's wrath, and while they burned, knelt round on quivering knees.

XLVI.

The noontide sun was darkened with that smoke,
The winds of eve dispersed those ashes grey,
The madness which these rites had lulled, awoke
Again at sunset.—Who shall dare to say
The deeds which night and fear brought forth, or weigh
In balance just the good and evil there?
He might man's deep and searchless heart display,
And cast a light on those dim labyrinths, where
Hope, near imagined chasms, is struggling with despair.

XLVII.

'Tis said, a mother dragged three children then,
 To those fierce flames which roast the eyes in the head,
 And laughed, and died; and that unholy men,
 Feasting like fiends upon the infidel dead,
 Looked from their meal, and saw an Angel tread
 The threshold of God's throne, and it was she!
 And, on that night, one without doubt or dread
 Came to the fire, and said, "Stop, I am he!
 Kill me!" they burned them both with hellish mockery.

XLVIII.

And, one by one, that night, young maidens came,
 Beauteous and calm, like shapes of living stone
 Clothed in the light of dreams, and by the flame
 Which shrank as overgorged, they laid them down,
 And sung a low sweet song, of which alone
 One word was heard, and that was Liberty;
 And that some kist their marble feet, with moan
 Like love, and died, and then that they did die
 With happy smiles, which sunk in white tranquillity.

Canto Eleventh.

I.

SHE saw me not—she heard me not—alone
 Upon the mountain's dizzy brink she stood;
 She spake not, breathed not, moved not—there was thrown
 Over her look, the shadow of a mood
 Which only clothes the heart in solitude,
 A thought of voiceless depth;—she stood alone,
 Above, the Heavens were spread;—below, the flood
 Was murmuring in its caves;—the wind had blown
 Her hair apart, thro' which her eyes and forehead shone.

II.

A cloud was hanging o'er the western mountains;
Before its blue and moveless depth were flying
Grey mists poured forth from the unresting fountains
Of darkness in the North:—the day was dying:—
Sudden, the sun shone forth, its beams were lying
Like boiling gold on Ocean, strange to see,
And on the shattered vapours, which defying
The power of light in vain, tossed restlessly
In the red Heaven, like wrecks in a tempestuous sea.

III.

It was a stream of living beams, whose bank
On either side by the cloud's cleft was made;
And where its chasms that flood of glory drank,
Its waves gushed forth like fire, and as if swayed
By some mute tempest, rolled on *her*; the shade
Of her bright image floated on the river
Of liquid light, which then did end and fade—
Her radiant shape upon its verge did shiver;
Aloft, her flowing hair like strings of flame did quiver.

IV.

I stood beside her, but she saw me not—
She looked upon the sea, and skies, and earth;
Rapture, and love, and admiration wrought
A passion deeper far than tears, or mirth,
Or speech, or gesture, or whate'er has birth
From common joy; which, with the speechless feeling
That led her there united, and shot forth
From her far eyes, a light of deep revealing,
All but her dearest self from my regard concealing.

V.

Her lips were parted, and the measured breath
Was now heard there;—her dark and intricate eyes
Orb within orb, deeper than sleep or death,
Absorbed the glories of the burning skies,
Which, mingling with her heart's deep ecstasies,
Burst from her looks and gestures;—and a light
Of liquid tenderness like love, did rise
From her whole frame, an atmosphere which quite
Arrayed her in its beams, tremulous and soft and bright.

VI.

She would have clasped me to her glowing frame;
 Those warm and odorous lips might soon have shed
 On mine the fragrance and the invisible flame
 Which now the cold winds stole;—she would have laid
 Upon my languid heart her dearest head;
 I might have heard her voice, tender and sweet;
 Her eyes mingling with mine, might soon have fed
 My soul with their own joy.—One moment yet
 I gazed—we parted then, never again to meet!

VII.

Never but once to meet on Earth again!
 She heard me as I fled—her eager tone
 Sunk on my heart, and almost wove a chain
 Around my will to link it with her own,
 So that my stern resolve was almost gone.
 “I cannot reach thee! whither dost thou fly?
 “My steps are faint—Come back, thou dearest one—
 “Return, ah me! return”—the wind past by
 On which those accents died, faint, far, and lingeringly.

VIII.

Woe! woe! that moonless midnight—Want and Pest
 Were horrible, but one more fell doth rear,
 As in a hydra’s swarming lair, its crest
 Eminent among those victims—even the Fear
 Of Hell: each girt by the hot atmosphere
 Of his blind agony, like a scorpion stung
 By his own rage upon his burning bier
 Of circling coals of fire; but still there clung
 One hope, like a keen sword on starting threads uphung:

IX.

Not death—death was no more refuge or rest;
 Not life—it was despair to be!—not sleep,
 For fiends and chasms of fire had dispossessed
 All natural dreams: to wake was not to weep,
 But to gaze mad and pallid, at the leap
 To which the Future, like a snaky scourge,
 Or like some tyrant’s eye, which aye doth keep
 Its withering beam upon his slaves, did urge
 Their steps; they heard the roar of Hell’s sulphureous surge.

X.

Each of that multitude alone, and lost
To sense of outward things, one hope yet knew;
As on a foam-girt crag some seaman tost,
Stares at the rising tide, or like the crew
Whilst now the ship is splitting thro' and thro';
Each, if the tramp of a far steed was heard,
Started from sick despair, or if there flew
One murmur on the wind, or if some word
Which none can gather yet, the distant crowd has stirred.

XI.

Why became cheeks wan with the kiss of death,
Paler from hope? they had sustained despair.
Why watched those myriads with suspended breath
Sleepless a second night? they are not here
The victims, and hour by hour, a vision drear,
Warm corpses fall upon the clay-cold dead;
And even in death their lips are wreathed with fear.—
The crowd is mute and moveless—overhead
Silent Arcturus shines—ha! hear'st thou not the tread

XII.

Of rushing feet? laughter? the shout, the scream,
Of triumph not to be contained? see! hark!
They come, they come, give way! alas, ye deem
Falsely—'tis but a crowd of maniacs stark
Driven, like a troop of spectres, thro' the dark,
From the choked well, whence a bright death-fire sprung,
A lurid earth-star, which dropped many a spark
From its blue train, and spreading widely, clung
To their wild hair, like mist the topmost pines among.

XIII.

And many from the crowd collected there,
Joined that strange dance in fearful sympathies;
There was the silence of a long despair,
When the last echo of those terrible cries
Came from a distant street, like agonies
Stifled afar.—Before the Tyrant's throne
All night his aged Senate sate, their eyes
In stony expectation fixed; when one
Sudden before them stood, a Stranger and alone.

XIV.

Dark Priests and haughty Warriors gazed on him
 With baffled wonder, for a hermit's vest
 Concealed his face; but when he spake, his tone,
 Ere yet the matter did their thoughts arrest,
 Earnest, benignant, calm, as from a breast
 Void of all hate or terror, made them start;
 For as with gentle accents he addressed
 His speech to them, on each unwilling heart
 Unusual awe did fall—a spirit-quelling dart.

XV.

“Ye Princes of the Earth, ye sit aghast
 Amid the ruin which yourselves have made,
 Yes, Desolation heard your trumpet's blast,
 And sprang from sleep!—dark Terror has obeyed
 Your bidding—O, that I whom ye have made
 Your foe, could set my dearest enemy free
 From pain and fear! but evil casts a shade,
 Which cannot pass so soon, and Hate must be
 The nurse and parent still of an ill progeny.

XVI.

“Ye turn to God for aid in your distress;
 Alas, that ye, the mighty and the wise,
 Who, if ye dared, might not aspire to less
 Than ye conceive of power, should fear the lies
 Which thou, and thou, didst frame for mysteries
 To blind your slaves:—consider your own thought,
 An empty and a cruel sacrifice
 Ye now prepare, for a vain idol wrought
 Out of the fears and hate which vain desires have brought.

XVII.

“Ye seek for happiness—alas, the day!
 Ye find it not in luxury nor in gold,
 Nor in the fame, nor in the envied sway
 For which, O willing slaves to Custom old,
 Severe task-mistress! ye your hearts have sold.
 Ye seek for peace, and when ye die, to dream
 No evil dreams: all mortal things are cold.
 And senseless then; if aught survive, I deem
 It must be love and joy, for they immortal seem,

XVIII.

"Fear not the future, weep not for the past.
O, could I win your ears to dare be now
Glorious, and great, and calm! that ye would cast
Into the dust those symbols of your woe,
Purple, and gold, and steel! that ye would go
Proclaiming to the nations whence ye came,
That Want, and Plague, and Fear, from slavery flow;
And that mankind is free, and that the shame
Of royalty and faith is lost in freedom's fame.

XIX.

"If thus 'tis well—if not, I come to say
That Laon"—while the Stranger spoke, among
The Council sudden tumult and affray
Arose, for many of those warriors young,
Had on his eloquent accents fed and hung
Like bees on mountain flowers; they knew the truth,
And from their thrones in vindication sprung;
The men of faith and law then without ruth
Drew forth their secret steel, and stabbed each ardent youth.

XX.

They stabbed them in the back and sneered—a slave
Who stood behind the throne, those corpses drew
Each to its bloody, dark, and secret grave;
And one more daring raised his steel anew
To pierce the Stranger: "What hast thou to do
With me, poor wretch?"—Calm, solemn, and severe,
That voice unstrung his sinews, and he threw
His dagger on the ground, and pale with fear,
Sate silently—his voice then did the Stranger rear.

XXI.

"It doth avail not that I weep for ye—
Ye cannot change, since ye are old and grey,
And ye have chosen your lot—your fame must be
A book of blood, whence in a milder day
Men shall learn truth, when ye are wrapt in clay:
Now ye shall triumph. I am Laon's friend,
And him to your revenge will I betray,
So ye concede one easy boon. Attend!
For now I speak of things which ye can apprehend.

XXII.

"There is a People mighty in its youth,
 A land beyond the Oceans of the West,
 Where, tho' with rudest rites, Freedom and Truth
 Are worshipped; from a glorious Mother's breast,
 Who, since high Athens fell, among the rest
 Sate like the Queen of Nations, but in woe,
 By inbred monsters outraged and oppressed,
 Turns to her chainless child for succour now,
 It draws the milk of Power in Wisdom's fullest flow.

XXIII.

"That land is like an Eagle, whose young gaze
 Feeds on the noontide beam, whose golden plume
 Floats moveless on the storm, and in the blaze
 Of sun-rise gleams when Earth is wrapt in gloom;
 An epitaph of glory for the tomb
 Of murdered Europe may thy fame be made,
 Great People: as the sands shalt thou become;
 Thy growth is swift as morn, when night must fade;
 The multitudinous Earth shall sleep beneath thy shade.

XXIV.

"Yes, in the desert there is built a home
 For Freedom. Genius is made strong to rear
 The monuments of man beneath the dome
 Of a new Heaven; myriads assemble there,
 Whom the proud lords of man, in rage or fear,
 Drive from their wasted homes: the boon I pray
 Is this,—that Cythna shall be convoyed there—
 Nay, start not at the name—America!
 And then to you this night Laon will I betray.

XXV.

"With me do what ye will. I am your foe!"
 The light of such a joy as makes the stare
 Of hungry snakes like living emeralds glow,
 Shone in a hundred human eyes—"Where, where
 Is Laon?—haste! fly! drag him swiftly here!
 We grant thy boon."—"I put no trust in ye,
 Swear by your dreadful God."—"We swear, we swear!"
 The Stranger threw his vest back suddenly,
 And smiled in gentle pride, and said, "Lo! I am he!"

Canto Twelfth.

I.

THE transport of a fierce and monstrous gladness
Spread thro' the multitudinous streets, fast flying
Upon the winds of fear; from his dull madness
The starveling waked, and died in joy; the dying,
Among the corpses in stark agony lying,
Just heard the happy tidings, and in hope
Closed their faint eyes; from house to house replying
With loud acclaim, the living shook Heaven's cope,
And filled the startled Earth with echoes: morn did ope

II.

Its pale eyes then; and lo! the long array
Of guards in golden arms, and Priests beside,
Singing their bloody hymns, whose garbs betray
The blackness of the faith it seems to hide;
And see, the Tyrant's gem-wrought chariot glide
Among the gloomy cowls and glittering spears—
A Shape of light is sitting by his side,
A child most beautiful. I'the midst appears
Laon,—exempt alone from mortal hopes and fears.

III.

His head and feet are bare, his hands are bound
Behind with heavy chains, yet none do wreak
Their scoffs on him, tho' myriads throng around;
There are no sneers upon his lip which speak
That scorn or hate has made him bold; his cheek
Resolve has not turned pale,—his eyes are mild
And calm, and like the morn about to break,
Smile on mankind—his heart seems reconciled
To all things and itself, like a reposing child.

IV.

Tumult was in the soul of all beside,
 Ill joy, or doubt, or fear; but those who saw
 Their tranquil victim pass, felt wonder glide
 Into their brain, and became calm with awe.—
 See, the slow pageant near the pile doth draw.
 A thousand torches in the spacious square,
 Borne by the ready slaves of ruthless law,
 Await the signal round: the morning fair
 Is changed to a dim night by that unnatural glare.

V.

And see! beneath a sun-bright canopy,
 Upon a platform level with the pile,
 The anxious Tyrant sit, enthroned on high,
 Girt by the chieftains of the host; all smile
 In expectation, but one child: the while
 I, Laon, led by mutes, ascend my bier
 Of fire, and look around; each distant isle
 Is dark in the bright dawn; towers far and near,
 Pierce like reposing flames the tremulous atmosphere.

VI.

There was such silence through the host, as when
 An earthquake trampling on some populous town,
 Has crushed ten thousand with one tread, and men
 Expect the second; all were mute but one,
 That fairest child, who, bold with love, alone
 Stood up before the King, without avail,
 Pleading for Laon's life—her stifled groan
 Was heard—she trembled like one aspen pale
 Among the gloomy pines of a Norwegian vale.

VII.

What were his thoughts linked in the morning sun,
 Among those reptiles, stingless with delay,
 Even like a tyrant's wrath?—the signal gun
 Roared—hark, again! in that dread pause he lay
 As in a quiet dream—the slaves obey—
 A thousand torches drop,—and hark, the last
 Bursts on that awful silence; far away
 Millions, with hearts that beat both loud and fast,
 Watch for the springing flame expectant and aghast.

VIII.

They fly—the torches fall—a cry of fear
Has startled the triumphant! they recede!
For ere the cannon's roar has died, they hear
The tramp of hoofs like earthquake, and a steed
Dark and gigantic, with the tempest's speed,
Bursts thro' their ranks: a woman sits thereon,
Fairer it seems than aught that earth can breed,
Calm, radiant, like the phantom of the dawn,
A spirit from the caves of day-light wandering gone.

IX.

All thought it was God's Angel come to sweep
The lingering guilty to their fiery grave;
The Tyrant from his throne in dread did leap,—
Her innocence his child from fear did save;
Scared by the faith they feigned, each priestly slave
Knelt for his mercy whom they served with blood,
And, like the reflux of a mighty wave
Sucked into the loud sea, the multitude
With crushing panic, fled in terror's altered mood.

X.

They pause, they blush, they gaze,—a gathering shout
Bursts like one sound from the ten thousand streams
Of a tempestuous sea:—that sudden rout
One checked, who, never in his mildest dreams
Felt awe from grace or loveliness, the seams
Of his rent heart so hard and cold a creed
Had seared with blistering ice—but he misdeems
That he is wise, whose wounds do only bleed
Inly for self, thus thought that Christian Priest indeed,

XI.

And others too, thought he was wise to see,
In pain, and fear, and hate, something divine;
In love and beauty—no divinity.—
Now with a bitter smile, whose light did shine
Like a fiend's hope upon his lips and eyne,
He said, and the persuasion of that sneer
Rallied his trembling comrades—"Is it mine
To stand alone, when kings and soldiers fear
A woman? God has sent his other victim here."

XII.

"Were it not impious," said the King, "to break
Our holy oath?"—"Impious to keep it, say!"
Shrieked the exulting Priest—"Slaves, to the stake
Bind her, and on my head the burthen lay
Of her just torments:—at the Judgment Day
Will I stand up before God's golden throne,
And cry, O Lord, to thee did I betray
An Atheist; but for me she would have known
Another moment's joy! the glory be thine own."

XIII.

They trembled, but replied not, nor obeyed,
Pausing in breathless silence. Cythna sprung
From her gigantic steed, who, like a shade
Chased by the winds, those vacant streets among
Fled tameless, as the brazen rein she flung
Upon his neck, and kissed his moonèd brow.
A piteous sight, that one so fair and young,
The clasp of such a fearful death should woo
With smiles of tender joy as beamed from Cythna now.

XIV.

The warm tears burst in spite of faith and fear,
From many a tremulous eye, but like soft dew
Which feed spring's earliest buds, hung gathered there,
Frozen by doubt,—alas, they could not chuse,
But weep; for when her faint limbs did refuse
To climb the pyre, upon the mutes she smiled;
And with her eloquent gestures, and the hues
Of her quick lips, even as a weary child
Wins sleep from some fond nurse with its caresses mild,

XV.

She won them, tho' unwilling, her to bind
Near me, among the snakes. When there had fled
One soft reproach that was most thrilling kind,
She smiled on me, and nothing then we said,
But each upon the other's countenance fed
Looks of insatiate love; the mighty veil
Which doth divide the living and the dead
Was almost rent, the world grew dim and pale,—
All light in Heaven or Earth beside our love did fail.—

XVI.

Yet,—yet—one brief relapse, like the last beam
Of dying flames, the stainless air around
Hung silent and serene—a blood-red gleam
Burst upwards, hurling fiercely from the ground
The globèd smoke,—I heard the mighty sound
Of its uprise, like a tempestuous ocean ;
And, thro' its chasms I saw, as in a swoond,
The tyrant's child fall without life or motion
Before his throne, subdued by some unseen emotion.

XVII.

And is this death ? the pyre has disappeared,
The Pestilence, the Tyrant, and the throng ;
The flames grow silent—slowly there is heard
The music of a breath-suspending song,
Which, like the kiss of love when life is young,
Steeps the faint eyes in darkness sweet and deep ;
With ever changing notes it floats along,
Till on my passive soul there seemed to creep
A melody, like waves on wrinkled sands that leap.

XVIII.

The warm touch of a soft and tremulous hand
Wakened me then ; lo, Cythna sate reclined
Beside me, on the waved and golden sand
Of a clear pool, upon a bank o'ertwined
With strange and star-bright flowers, which to the wind
Breathed divine odour ; high above, was spread
The emerald heaven of trees of unknown kind,
Whose moonlike blooms and bright fruit overhead
A shadow, which was light, upon the waters shed.

XIX.

And round about sloped many a lawny mountain
With incense-bearing forests, and vast caves
Of marble radiance to that mighty fountain ;
And where the flood its own bright margin laves,
Their echoes talk with its eternal waves,
Which, from the depths whose jagged caverns breed
Their unreposing strife, it lifts and heaves,—
Till thro' a chasm of hills they roll, and feed
A river deep, which flies with smooth but arrowy speed.

XX.

As we sate gazing in a trance of wonder,
 A boat approached, borne by the musical air
 Along the waves which sung and sparkled under
 Its rapid keel—a wingèd shape sate there,
 A child with silver-shining wings, so fair,
 That as her bark did thro' the waters glide,
 The shadow of the lingering waves did wear
 Light, as from starry beams; from side to side,
 While veering to the wind her plumes the bark did guide.

XXI.

The boat was one curved shell of hollow pearl,
 Almost translucent with the light divine
 Of her within; the prow and stern did curl
 Hornèd on high, like the young moon supine,
 When o'er dim twilight mountains dark with pine,
 It floats upon the sunset's sea of beams,
 Whose golden waves in many a purple line
 Fade fast, till borne on sunlight's ebbing streams,
 Dilating, on earth's verge the sunken meteor gleams.

XXII.

Its keel has struck the sands beside our feet;—
 Then Cythna turned to me, and from her eyes
 Which swam with unshed tears, a look more sweet
 Than happy love, a wild and glad surprise,
 Glanced as she spake; "Aye, this is Paradise
 And not a dream, and we are all united!
 Lo, that is mine own child, who in the guise
 Of madness came, like day to one benighted
 In lonesome woods: my heart is now too well requited!"

XXIII.

And then she wept aloud, and in her arms
 Clasped that bright Shape, less marvellously fair
 Than her own human hues and living charms;
 Which, as she leaned in passion's silence there,
 Breathed warmth on the cold bosom of the air,
 Which seemed to blush and tremble with delight;
 The glossy darkness of her streaming hair
 Fell o'er that snowy child, and wrapt from sight
 The fond and long embrace which did their hearts unite.

XXIV.

Then the bright child, the plumèd Seraph came,
And fixed its blue and beaming eyes on mine,
And said, "I was disturbed by tremulous shame
When once we met, yet knew that I was thine
From the same hour in which thy lips divine
Kindled a clinging dream within my brain,
Which ever waked when I might sleep, to twine
Thine image with *her* memory dear—again
We meet; exempted now from mortal fear or pain.

XXV.

"When the consuming flames had wrapt ye round,
The hope which I had cherished went away;
I fell in agony on the senseless ground,
And hid mine eyes in dust, and far astray
My mind was gone, when bright, like dawning day,
The Spectre of the Plague before me flew,
And breathed upon my lips, and seemed to say,
'They wait for thee beloved;—then I knew
The death-mark on my breast, and became calm anew.

XXVI.

"It was the calm of love—for I was dying.
I saw the black and half-extinguished pyre
In its own grey and shrunken ashes lying;
The pitchy smoke of the departed fire
Still hung in many a hollow dome and spire
Above the towers like night; beneath whose shade
Awed by the ending of their own desire
The armies stood; a vacancy was made
In expectation's depth, and so they stood dismayed.

XXVII.

"The frightful silence of that altered mood,
The tortures of the dying clove alone,
Till one uprose among the multitude,
And said—'The flood of time is rolling on,
We stand upon its brink, whilst *they* are gone
To glide in peace down death's mysterious stream.
Have ye done well? they moulder flesh and bone,
Who might have made this life's envenomed dream
A sweeter draught than ye will ever taste, I deem.

XXVIII.

“‘These perish as the good and great of yore
 Have perished, and their murderers will repent,
 Yes, vain and barren tears shall flow before
 Yon smoke has faded from the firmament
 Even for this cause, that ye who must lament
 The death of those that made this world so fair,
 Cannot recall them now; but then is lent
 To man the wisdom of a high despair,
 When such can die, and he live on and linger here.

XXIX.

“‘Aye, ye may fear not now the Pestilence,
 From fabled hell as by a charm withdrawn,
 All power and faith must pass, since calmly hence
 In torment and in fire have Atheists gone;
 And ye must sadly turn away, and moan
 In secret, to his home each one returning,
 And to long ages shall this hour be known;
 And slowly shall its memory, ever burning,
 Fill this dark night of things with an eternal morning.

XXX.

“‘For me the world is grown too void and cold,
 Since hope pursues immortal destiny
 With steps thus slow—therefore shall ye behold
 How Atheists and Republicans can die—
 Tell to your children this!’ then suddenly
 He sheathed a dagger in his heart and fell;
 My brain grew dark in death, and yet to me
 There came a murmur from the crowd, to tell
 Of deep and mighty change which suddenly befell.

XXXI.

“Then suddenly I stood a wingèd Thought
 Before the immortal Senate, and the seat
 Of that star-shining spirit, whence is wrought
 The strength of its dominion, good and great,
 The better Genius of this world’s estate.
 His realm around one mighty Fane is spread,
 Elysian islands bright and fortunate,
 Calm dwellings of the free and happy dead,
 Where I am sent to lead!” these wingèd words she said,

XXXII.

And with the silence of her eloquent smile,
Bade us embark in her divine canoe;
Then at the helm we took our seat, the while
Above her head those plumes of dazzling hue
Into the winds' invisible stream she threw,
Sitting beside the prow: like gossamer,
On the swift breath of morn, the vessel flew
O'er the bright whirlpools of that fountain fair,
Whose shores receded fast, whilst we seemed lingering there;

XXXIII.

Till down that mighty stream dark, calm, and fleet,
Between a chasm of cedarn mountains riven,
Chased by the thronging winds whose viewless feet
As swift as twinkling beams, had, under Heaven,
From woods and waves wild sounds and odours driven,
The boat fled visibly—three nights and days,
Borne like a cloud thro' morn, and noon, and even,
We sailed along the winding watery ways
Of the vast stream, a long and labyrinthine maze.

XXXIV.

A scene of joy and wonder to behold
That river's shapes and shadows changing ever,
Where the broad sunrise, filled with deepening gold,
Its whirlpools, where all hues did spread and quiver,
And where melodious falls did burst and shiver
Among rocks clad with flowers, the foam and spray
Sparkled like stars upon the sunny river,
Or when the moonlight poured a holier day,
One vast and glittering lake around green islands lay.

XXXV.

Morn, noon, and even, that boat of pearl outran
The streams which bore it, like the arrowy cloud
Of tempest, or the speedier thought of man,
Which fieth forth and cannot make abode,
Sometimes thro' forests, deep like night, we glode,
Between the walls of mighty mountains crowned
With Cyclopean piles, whose turrets proud,
The homes of the departed, dimly frowned
O'er the bright waves which girt their dark foundations round.

XXXVI.

Sometimes between the wide and flowering meadows,
 Mile after mile we sailed, and 'twas delight
 To see far off the sunbeams chase the shadows
 Over the grass; sometimes beneath the night
 Of wide and vaulted caves, whose roofs were bright
 With starry gems, we fled, whilst from their deep
 And dark-green chasms, shades beautiful and white,
 Amid sweet sounds across our path would sweep,
 Like swift and lovely dreams that walk the waves of sleep.

XXXVII.

And ever as we sailed, our minds were full
 Of love and wisdom, which would overflow
 In converse wild, and sweet, and wonderful;
 And in quick smiles whose light would come and go,
 Like music o'er wide waves, and in the flow
 Of sudden tears, and in the mute caress—
 For a deep shade was cleft, and we did know,
 That virtue, tho' obscured on Earth, not less
 Survives all mortal change in lasting loveliness.

XXXVIII.

Three days and nights we sailed, as thought and feeling
 Number delightful hours—for thro' the sky
 The spherèd lamps of day and night, revealing
 New changes and new glories, rolled on high,
 Sun, Moon, and moonlike lamps, the progeny
 Of a diviner Heaven, serene and fair:
 On the fourth day, wild as a wind-wrought sea
 The stream became, and fast and faster bare
 The spirit-wingèd boat, steadily speeding there.

XXXIX.

Steady and swift, where the waves rolled like mountains
 Within the vast ravine, whose rifts did pour
 Tumultuous floods from their ten thousand fountains,
 The thunder of whose earth-uplifting roar
 Made the air sweep in whirlwinds from the shore,
 Calm as a shade, the boat of that fair child
 Securely fled, that rapid stress before,
 Amid the topmost spray, and sunbows wild,
 Wreathed in the silver mist: in joy and pride we smiled.

XL.

The torrent of that wide and raging river
Is past, and our aërial speed suspended.
We look behind; a golden mist did quiver
Where its wild surges with the lake were blended:
Our bark hung there, as on a line suspended
Between two heavens, that windless waveless lake;
Which four great cataracts from four vales, attended
By mists, aye feed; from rocks and clouds they break,
And of that azure sea a silent refuge make.

XLI.

Motionless resting on the lake awhile,
I saw its marge of snow-bright mountains rear
Their peaks aloft, I saw each radiant isle,
And in the midst, afar, even like a sphere
Hung in one hollow sky, did there appear
The Temple of the Spirit; on the sound
Which issued thence, drawn nearer and more near,
Like the swift moon this glorious earth around,
The charmed boat approached, and there its haven found.

ROSALIND AND HELEN,

A MODERN ECLOGUE;

WITH

OTHER POEMS.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE story of "Rosalind and Helen" is, undoubtedly, not an attempt in the highest style of poetry. It is in no degree calculated to excite profound meditation; and if, by interesting the affections and amusing the imagination, it awaken a certain ideal melancholy favourable to the reception of more important impressions, it will produce in the reader all that the writer experienced in the composition. I resigned myself, as I wrote, to the impulse of the feelings which moulded the conception of the story; and this impulse determined the pauses of a measure, which only pretends to be regular inasmuch as it corresponds with, and expresses, the irregularity of the imaginations which inspired it.

I do not know which of the few scattered poems I left in England will be selected by my bookseller, to add to this collection. One, which I sent from Italy, was written after a day's excursion ~~among~~ those lovely mountains which surround what was once the retreat, and where is now the sepulchre, of Petrarch. If any one is inclined to condemn the insertion of the introductory lines, which image forth the sudden relief of a state of deep despondency by the radiant visions disclosed by the sudden burst of an Italian sunrise in autumn on the highest peak of those delightful

mountains, I can only offer as my excuse, that they were not erased at the request of a dear friend, with whom added years of intercourse only add to my apprehension of its value, and who would have had more right than any one to complain, that she has not been able to extinguish in me the very power of delineating sadness.

Naples, Dec. 20, 1818.

ROSALIND AND HELEN.

Rosalind, Helen and her Child.

Scene, the Shore of the Lake of Como.

HELEN.

COME hither, my sweet Rosalind.	
'Tis long since thou and I have met;	
And yet methinks it were unkind	
Those moments to forget.	
Come sit by me. I see thee stand	5
By this lone lake, in this far land,	
Thy loose hair in the light wind flying,	
Thy sweet voice to each tone of even	
United, and thine eyes replying	
To the hues of yon fair heaven.	10
Come, gentle friend: wilt sit by me?	
And be as thou wert wont to be	
Ere we were disunited?	
None doth behold us now: the power	
That led us forth at this lone hour	15
Will be but ill requited	
If thou depart in scorn: oh! come,	
And talk of our abandoned home.	
Remember, this is Italy,	
And we are exiles. Talk with me	20
Of that our land, whose wilds and floods,	

Barren and dark although they be,
 Were dearer than these chesnut woods:
 Those heathy paths, that inland stream,
 And the blue mountains, shapes which seem 25
 Like wrecks of childhood's sunny dream:
 Which that we have abandoned now,
 Weighs on the heart like that remorse
 Which altered friendship leaves. I seek
 No more our youthful intercourse. 30
 That cannot be! Rosalind, speak,
 Speak to me. Leave me not.—When morn did come,
 When evening fell upon our common home,
 When for one hour we parted,—do not frown:
 I would not chide thee, though thy faith is broken: 35
 But turn to me. Oh! by this cherished token,
 Of woven hair, which thou wilt not disown,
 Turn, as 'twere but the memory of me,
 And not my scornèd self who prayed to thee.

ROSALIND.

Is it a dream, or do I see 40
 And hear frail Helen? I would flee
 Thy tainting touch; but former years
 Arise, and bring forbidden tears;
 And my o'erburthened memory
 Seeks yet its lost repose in thee. 45
 I share thy crime. I cannot choose
 But weep for thee: mine own strange grief
 But seldom stoops to such relief:
 Nor ever did I love thee less,
 Though mourning o'er thy wickedness 50
 Even with a sister's woe. I knew
 What to the evil world is due,
 And therefore sternly did refuse
 To link me with the infamy
 Of one so lost as Helen. Now 55
 Bewildered by my dire despair,
 Wondering I blush, and weep that thou
 Should'st love me still,—thou only!—There,
 Let us sit on that grey stone,
 Till our mournful talk be done. 60

HELEN.

Alas! not there; I cannot bear
The murmur of this lake to hear.
A sound from there, Rosalind dear,
Which never yet I heard elsewhere
But in our native land, recurs,
Even here where now we meet. It stirs
Too much of suffocating sorrow!
In the dell of yon dark chesnut wood
Is a stone seat, a solitude
Less like our own. The ghost of peace
Will not desert this spot. To-morrow,
If thy kind feelings should not cease,
We may sit here.

65

70

ROSALIND.

Thou lead, my sweet,
And I will follow.

HENRY.

'Tis Fenici's seat
Where you are going? This is not the way,
Mamma; it leads behind those trees that grow
Close to the little river.

75

HELEN.

Yes: I know:
I was bewildered. Kiss me, and be gay,
Dear boy: why do you sob?

HENRY.

I do not know:
But it might break any one's heart to see
You and the lady cry so bitterly.

80

HELEN.

It is a gentle child, my friend. Go home,
Henry, and play with Lilla till I come.
We only cried with joy to see each other;
We are quite merry now: Good night.

The boy

85

Lifted a sudden look upon his mother,
And in the gleam of forced and hollow joy
Which lightened o'er her face, laughed with the glee
Of light and unsuspecting infancy,

And whispered in her ear, "Bring home with you 90
That sweet strange lady-friend." Then off he flew,
But stopt, and beckoned with a meaning smile,
Where the road turned. Pale Rosalind the while,
Hiding her face, stood weeping silently.

In silence then they took the way 95
Beneath the forest's solitude.

It was a vast and antique wood,
Thro' which they took their way;
And the grey shades of evening
O'er that green wilderness did fling 100
Still deeper solitude.

Pursuing still the path that wound
The vast and knotted trees around
Thro' which slow shades were wandering,
To a deep lawny dell they came, 105

To a stone seat beside a spring,
O'er which the columned wood did frame
A roofless temple, like the fane
Where, ere new creeds could faith obtain,
Man's early race once knelt beneath 110
The overhanging deity.

O'er this fair fountain hung the sky,
Now spangled with rare stars. The snake,
The pale snake, that with eager breath
Creeps here his noontide thirst to slake, 115

Is beaming with many a mingled hue,
Shed from yon dome's eternal blue,
When he floats on that dark and lucid flood
In the light of his own loveliness;

And the birds that in the fountain dip 120
Their plumes, with fearless fellowship
Above and round him wheel and hover.

The fitful wind is heard to stir
One solitary leaf on high;
The chirping of the grasshopper 125
Fills every pause. There is emotion
In all that dwells at noontide here:
Then, thro' the intricate wild wood,

A maze of life and light and motion
Is woven. But there is stillness now: 130
Gloom, and the trance of Nature now:
The snake is in his cave asleep;
The birds are on the branches dreaming:
Only the shadows creep:
Only the glow-worm is gleaming: 135
Only the owls and the nightingales
Wake in this dell when day-light fails,
And grey shades gather in the woods:
And the owls have all fled far away
In a merrier glen to hoot and play, 140
For the moon is veiled and sleeping now.
The accustomed nightingale still broods
On her accustomed bough,
But she is mute; for her false mate
Has fled and left her desolate. 145

This silent spot tradition old
Had peopled with the spectral dead.
For the roots of the speaker's hair felt cold
And stiff, as with tremulous lips he told
That a hellish shape at midnight led 150
The ghost of a youth with hoary hair,
And sate on the seat beside him there,
Till a naked child came wandering by,
When the fiend would change to a lady fair!
A fearful tale! The truth was worse: 155
For here a sister and a brother
Had solemnized a monstrous curse,
Meeting in this fair solitude:
For beneath yon very sky,
Had they resigned to one another 160
Body and soul. The multitude,
Tracking them to the secret wood,
Tore limb from limb their innocent child,
And stabbed and trampled on it's mother;
But the youth, for God's most holy grace, 165
A priest saved to burn in the market-place.

Duly at evening Helen came
To this lone silent spot,
From the wrecks of a tale of wilder sorrow
So much of sympathy to borrow 170
As soothed her own dark lot.
Duly each evening from her home,
With her fair child would Helen come
To sit upon that antique seat,
While the hues of day were pale; 175
And the bright boy beside her feet
Now lay, lifting at intervals
His broad blue eyes on her;
Now, where some sudden impulse calls
Following. He was a gentle boy 180
And in all gentle sports took joy;
Oft in a dry leaf for a boat,
With a small feather for a sail,
His fancy on that spring would float,
If some invisible breeze might stir 185
It's marble calm: and Helen smiled
Thro' tears of awe on the gay child,
To think that a boy as fair as he,
In years which never more may be,
By that same fount, in that same wood, 190
The like sweet fancies had pursued;
And that a mother, lost like her,
Had mournfully sate watching him.
Then all the scene was wont to swim
Through the mist of a burning tear. 195

For many months had Helen known
This scene; and now she thither turned
Her footsteps, not alone.
The friend whose falsehood she had mourned,
Sate with her on that seat of stone. 200
Silent they sate; for evening,
And the power it's glimpses bring
Had, with one awful shadow, quelled
The passion of their grief. They sate
With linkèd hands, for unrepelled 205

Had Helen taken Rosalind's.
Like the autumn wind, when it unbinds
The tangled locks of the nightshade's hair,
Which is twined in the sultry summer air
Round the walls of an outworn sepulchre, 210
Did the voice of Helen, sad and sweet,
And the sound of her heart that ever beat,
As with sighs and words she breathed on her,
Unbind the knots of her friend's despair,
Till her thoughts were free to float and flow ; 215
And from her labouring bosom now,
Like the bursting of a prisoned flame,
The voice of a long pent sorrow came.

ROSALIND.

I saw the dark earth fall upon
The coffin ; and I saw the stone 220
Laid over him whom this cold breast
Had pillowed to his nightly rest !
Thou knowest not, thou canst not know
My agony. Oh ! I could not weep :
The sources whence such blessings flow 225
Were not to be approached by me !
But I could smile, and I could sleep,
Though with a self-accusing heart.
In morning's light, in evening's gloom,
I watched,—and would not thence depart— 230
My husband's unlamented tomb.
My children knew their sire was gone,
But when I told them,—‘he is dead,’—
They laughed aloud in frantic glee,
They clapped their hands and leaped about, 235
Answering each other's ecstasy
With many a prank and merry shout.
But I sat silent and alone,
Wrapped in the mock of mourning weed.

They laughed, for he was dead : but I 240
Sate with a hard and tearless eye,
And with a heart which would deny
The secret joy it could not quell,

Low muttering o'er his loathèd name ;
 Till from that self-contention came 245
 Remorse where sin was none ; a hell
 Which in pure spirits should not dwell.

I'll tell thee truth. He was a man
 Hard, selfish, loving only gold,
 Yet full of guile : his pale eyes ran 250
 With tears, which each some falsehood told,
 And oft his smooth and bridled tongue
 Would give the lie to his flushing cheek :
 He was a coward to the strong :
 He was a tyrant to the weak, 255
 On whom his vengeance he would wreak :
 For scorn, whose arrows search the heart,
 From many a stranger's eye would dart,
 And on his memory cling, and follow
 His soul to it's home so cold and hollow. 260
 He was a tyrant to the weak,
 And we were such, alas the day !
 Oft, when my little ones at play,
 Were in youth's natural lightness gay,
 Or if they listened to some tale 265
 Of travellers, or of fairy land,—
 When the light from the wood-fire's dying brand
 Flashed on their faces,—if they heard
 Or thought they heard upon the stair
 His footstep, the suspended word 270
 Died on my lips : we all grew pale :
 The babe at my bosom was hushed with fear
 If it thought it heard its father near ;
 And my two wild boys would near my knee
 Cling, cowed and cowering fearfully. 275

I'll tell thee truth : I loved another.
 His name in my ear was ever ringing,
 His form to my brain was ever clinging :
 Yet if some stranger breathed that name,
 My lips turned white, and my heart beat fast : 280
 My nights were once haunted by dreams of flame,

My days were dim in the shadow cast
By the memory of the same!
Day and night, day and night,
He was my breath and life and light, 285
For three short years, which soon were past.
On the fourth, my gentle mother
Led me to the shrine, to be
His sworn bride eternally.
And now we stood on the altar stair, 290
When my father came from a distant land,
And with a loud and fearful cry
Rushed between us suddenly.
I saw the stream of his thin grey hair,
I saw his lean and lifted hand, 295
And heard his words,—and live! Oh God!
Wherefore do I live?—‘Hold, hold!’
He cried,—‘I tell thee ’tis her brother!
Thy mother, boy, beneath the sod
Of yon church-yard rests in her shroud so cold: 300
I am now weak, and pale, and old:
We were once dear to one another,
I and that corpse! Thou art our child!’
Then with a laugh both long and wild
The youth upon the pavement fell: 305
They found him dead! All looked on me,
The spasms of my despair to see:
But I was calm. I went away:
I was clammy-cold like clay!
I did not weep: I did not speak: 310
But day by day, week after week,
I walked about like a corpse alive!
Alas! sweet friend, you must believe
This heart is stone: it did not break.

My father lived a little while, 315
But all might see that he was dying,
He smiled with such a woful smile!
When he was in the church-yard lying
Among the worms, we grew quite poor,
So that no one would give us bread: 320

My mother looked at me, and said
 Faint words of cheer, which only meant
 That she could die and be content;
 So I went forth from the same church door
 To another husband's bed. 825
 And this was he who died at last,
 When weeks and months and years had past,
 Through which I firmly did fulfil
 My duties, a devoted wife, 830
 With the stern step of vanquished will,
 Walking beneath the night of life,
 Whose hours extinguished, like slow rain
 Falling for ever, pain by pain,
 The very hope of death's dear rest;
 Which, since the heart within my breast 835
 Of natural life was dispossessed,
 It's strange sustainer there had been.

When flowers were dead, and grass was green
 Upon my mother's grave,—that mother
 Whom to outlive, and cheer, and make 840
 My wan eyes glitter for her sake,
 Was my vowed task, the single care
 Which once gave life to my despair,—
 When she was a thing that did not stir
 And the crawling worms were cradling her 845
 To a sleep more deep and so more sweet
 Than a baby's rocked on its nurse's knee,
 I lived: a living pulse then beat
 Beneath my heart that awakened me.
 What was this pulse so warm and free? 850
 Alas! I knew it could not be
 My own dull blood: 'twas like a thought
 Of liquid love, that spread and wrought
 Under my bosom and in my brain,
 And crept with the blood through every vein; 855
 And hour by hour, day after day,
 The wonder could not charm away,
 But laid in sleep, my wakeful pain,
 Until I knew it was a child,

And then I wept. For long, long years 360
These frozen eyes had shed no tears:
But now—'twas the season fair and mild
When April has wept itself to May:
I sate through the sweet sunny day
By my window bowered round with leaves, 365
And down my cheeks the quick tears ran
Like twinkling rain-drops from the eaves,
When warm spring showers are passing o'er:
O Helen, none can ever tell
The joy it was to weep once more! 370

I wept to think how hard it were
To kill my babe, and take from it
The sense of light, and the warm air,
And my own fond and tender care,
And love and smiles; ere I knew yet 375
That these for it might, as for me,
Be the masks of a grinning mockery.
And haply, I would dream, 'twere sweet
To feed it from my faded breast,
Or mark my own heart's restless beat 380
Rock it to its untroubled rest,
And watch the growing soul beneath
Dawn in faint smiles; and hear its breath,
Half interrupted by calm sighs,
And search the depth of its fair eyes 385
For long departed memories!
And so I lived till that sweet load
Was lightened. Darkly forward flowed
The stream of years, and on it bore
Two shapes of gladness to my sight; 390
Two other babes, delightful more
In my lost soul's abandoned night,
Than their own country ships may be
Sailing towards wrecked mariners,
Who cling to the rock of a wintry sea. 395
For each, as it came, brought soothing tears,
And a loosening warmth, as each one lay
Sucking the sullen milk away

About my frozen heart, did play,
And weaned it, oh how painfully!— 400
As they themselves were weaned each one
From that sweet food,—even from the thirst
Of death, and nothingness, and rest,
Strange inmate of a living breast!
Which all that I had undergone 405
Of grief and shame, since she, who first
The gates of that dark refuge closed,
Came to my sight, and almost burst
The seal of that Lethean spring;
But these fair shadows interposed: 410
For all delights are shadows now!
And from my brain to my dull brow
The heavy tears gather and flow:
I cannot speak: Oh let me weep!

The tears which fell from her wan eyes 415
Glimmered among the moonlight dew:
Her deep hard sobs and heavy sighs
Their echoes in the darkness threw.
When she grew calm, she thus did keep
The tenor of her tale:

He died: 420

I know not how: he was not old,
If age be numbered by its years:
But he was bowed and bent with fears,
Pale with the quenchless thirst of gold,
Which, like fierce fever, left him weak; 425
And his strait lip and bloated cheek
Were warped in spasms by hollow sneers;
And selfish cares with barren plough,
Not age, had lined his narrow brow,
And foul and cruel thoughts, which feed 430
Upon the withering life within,
Like vipers on some poisonous weed.
Whether his ill were death or sin
None knew, until he died indeed,
And then men owned they were the same. 435
Seven days within my chamber lay

That corse, and my babes made holiday:
At last, I told them what is death:
The eldest, with a kind of shame,
Came to my knees with silent breath, 440
And sate awe-stricken at my feet;
And soon the others left their play,
And sate there too. It is unmeet
To shed on the brief flower of youth
The withering knowledge of the grave; 445
From me remorse then wrung that truth.
I could not bear the joy which gave
Too just a response to mine own.
In vain. I dared not feign a groan;
And in their artless looks I saw, 450
Between the mists of fear and awe,
That my own thought was theirs; and they
Expressed it not in words, but said,
Each in its heart, how every day
Will pass in happy work and play, 455
Now he is dead and gone away.

After the funeral all our kin
Assembled, and the will was read.
My friend, I tell thee, even the dead
Have strength, their putrid shrouds within, 460
To blast and torture. Those who live
Still fear the living, but a corse
Is merciless, and Power doth give
To such pale tyrants half the spoil
He rends from those who groan and toil, 465
Because they blush not with remorse
Among their crawling worms. Behold,
I have no child! my tale grows old
With grief, and staggers: let it reach
The limits of my feeble speech, 470
And languidly at length recline
On the brink of its own grave and mine.

Thou knowest what a thing is Poverty
Among the fallen on evil days:

'Tis Crime, and Fear, and Infamy,
And houseless Want in frozen ways
Wandering ungarmented, and Pain,
And, worse than all, that inward stain
Foul Self-contempt, which drowns in sneers
Youth's starlight smile, and makes its tears
First like hot gall, then dry for ever!
And well thou knowest a mother never
Could doom her children to this ill,
And well he knew the same. The will
Imported, that if e'er again
I sought my children to behold,
Or in my birth-place did remain
Beyond three days, whose hours were told,
They should inherit nought: and he,
To whom next came their patrimony,
A sallow lawyer, cruel and cold,
Aye watched me, as the will was read,
With eyes askance, which sought to see
The secrets of my agony;
And with close lips and anxious brow
Stood canvassing still to and fro
The chance of my resolve, and all
The dead man's caution just did call;
For in that killing lie 'twas said—
"She is adulterous, and doth hold
In secret that the Christian creed
Is false, and therefore is much need
That I should have a care to save
My children from eternal fire."
Friend, he was sheltered by the grave,
And therefore dared to be a liar!
In truth, the Indian on the pyre
Of her dead husband, half consumed,
As well might there be false, as I
To those abhorred embraces doomed,
Far worse than fire's brief agony.
As to the Christian creed, if true
Or false, I never questioned it:
I took it as the vulgar do:

Nor my vext soul had leisure yet 515
To doubt the things men say, or deem
That they are other than they seem.

All present who those crimes did hear,
In feigned or actual scorn and fear,
Men, women, children, slunk away, 520
Whispering with self-contented pride,
Which half suspects its own base lie.

I spoke to none, nor did abide,
But silently I went my way,
Nor noticed I where joyously 525

Sate my two younger babes at play,
In the court-yard through which I past;
But went with footsteps firm and fast
Till I came to the brink of the ocean green,
And there, a woman with grey hairs, 530

Who had my mother's servant been,
Kneeling, with many tears and prayers,
Made me accept a purse of gold,
Half of the earnings she had kept
To refuge her when weak and old. 535

With woe, which never sleeps or slept,
I wander now. 'Tis a vain thought—
But on yon alp, whose snowy head
'Mid the azure air is islanded,
(We see it o'er the flood of cloud, 540

Which sunrise from its eastern caves
Drives, wrinkling into golden waves,
Hung with its precipices proud,
From that grey stone where first we met)
There, now who knows the dead feel nought? 545

Should be my grave; for he who yet
Is my soul's soul, once said: "'Twere sweet
'Mid stars and lightnings to abide,
And winds and lulling snows, that beat
With their soft flakes the mountain wide, 550

When weary meteor lamps repose,
And languid storms their pinions close:
And all things strong and bright and pure,

And ever during, aye endure:
Who knows, if one were buried there, 555
But these things might our spirits make,
Amid the all-surrounding air,
Their own eternity partake?"
Then 'twas a wild and playful saying
At which I laughed, or seemed to laugh: 560
They were his words: now heed my praying,
And let them be my epitaph.
Thy memory for a term may be
My monument. Wilt remember me?
I know thou wilt, and canst forgive 565
Whilst in this erring world to live
My soul disdained not, that I thought
Its lying forms were worthy aught
And much less thee.

HELEN.

O speak not so,
But come to me and pour thy woe 570
Into this heart, full though it be,
Aye overflowing with its own:
I thought that grief had severed me
From all beside who weep and groan;
Its likeness upon earth to be, 575
Its express image; but thou art
More wretched. Sweet! we will not part
Henceforth, if death be not division;
If so, the dead feel no contrition.
But wilt thou hear, since last we parted 580
All that has left me broken hearted?

ROSALIND.

Yes, speak. The faintest stars are scarcely shorn
Of their thin beams by that delusive morn
Which sinks again in darkness, like the light
Of early love, soon lost in total night. 585

HELEN.

Alas! Italian winds are mild,
But my bosom is cold—wintry cold—
When the warm air weaves, among the fresh leaves,
Soft music, my poor brain is wild,

And I am weak like a nursling child, 590
Though my soul with grief is grey and old.

ROSALIND.

Weep not at thine own words, though they must make
Me weep. What is thy tale?

HELEN.

I fear 'twill shake
Thy gentle heart with tears. Thou well
Rememberest when we met no more, 595
And, though I dwelt with Lionel,
That friendless caution pierced me sore
With grief; a wound my spirit bore
Indignantly, but when he died
With him lay dead both hope and pride. 600

Alas! all hope is buried now.
But then men dreamed the aged earth
Was labouring in that mighty birth,
Which many a poet and a sage
Has aye foreseen—the happy age 605
When truth and love shall dwell below
Among the works and ways of men;
Which on this world not power but will
Even now is wanting to fulfil.

Among mankind what thence befell 610
Of strife, how vain, is known too well;
When liberty's dear pæan fell
'Mid murderous howls. To Lionel,
Though of great wealth and lineage high,
Yet through those dungeon walls there came 615
Thy thrilling light, O liberty!
And as the meteor's midnight flame
Startles the dreamer, sun-like truth
Flashed on his visionary youth,
And filled him, not with love, but faith, 620
And hope, and courage mute in death;
For love and life in him were twins,
Born at one birth: in every other
First life then love its course begins,

Though they be children of one mother; 625
 And so through this dark world they fleet
 Divided, till in death they meet:
 But he loved all things ever. Then
 He past amid the strife of men,
 And stood at the throne of armèd power 630
 Pleading for a world of woe:
 Secure as one on a rock-built tower
 O'er the wrecks which the surge trails to and fro,
 'Mid the passions wild of human kind
 He stood, like a spirit calming them; 635
 For, it was said, his words could bind
 Like music the lulled crowd, and stem
 That torrent of unquiet dream,
 Which mortals truth and reason deem,
 But is revenge and fear and pride. 640
 Joyous he was; and hope and peace
 On all who heard him did abide,
 Raining like dew from his sweet talk,
 As where the evening star may walk
 Along the brink of the gloomy seas, 645
 Liquid mists of splendour quiver.
 His very gestures touched to tears
 The unpersuaded tyrant, never
 So moved before: his presence stung
 The torturers with their victim's pain, 650
 And none knew how; and through their ears,
 The subtle witchcraft of his tongue
 Unlocked the hearts of those who keep
 Gold, the world's bond of slavery.
 Men wondered, and some sneered to see 655
 One sow what he could never reap:
 For he is rich, they said, and young,
 And might drink from the depths of luxury.
 If he seeks fame, fame never crowned
 The champion of a trampled creed: 660
 If he seeks power, power is enthroned
 'Mid antient rights and wrongs, to feed
 Which hungry wolves with praise and spoil,
 Those who would sit near power must toil;

And such, there sitting, all may see. 665
What seeks he? All that others seek
He casts away, like a vile weed
Which the sea casts unreturningly.
That poor and hungry men should break
The laws which wreak them toil and scorn, 670
We understand; but Lionel
We know is rich and nobly born.
So wondered they: yet all men loved
Young Lionel, though few approved;
All but the priests, whose hatred fell 675
Like the unseen blight of a smiling day,
The withering honey dew, which clings
Under the bright green buds of May,
Whilst they unfold their emerald wings:
For he made verses wild and queer 680
On the strange creeds priests hold so dear,
Because they bring them land and gold.
Of devils and saints and all such gear,
He made tales which whoso heard or read
Would laugh till he were almost dead. 685
So this grew a proverb: "don't get old
Till Lionel's 'banquet in hell' you hear,
And then you will laugh yourself young again."
So the priests hated him, and he
Repaid their hate with cheerful glee. 690

Ah, smiles and joyance quickly died,
For public hope grew pale and dim
In an altered time and tide,
And in its wasting withered him,
As a summer flower that blows too soon 695
Droops in the smile of the waning moon,
When it scatters through an April night
The frozen dews of wrinkling blight.
None now hoped more. Grey Power was seated
Safely on her ancestral throne; 700
And Faith, the Python, undefeated,
Even to its blood-stained steps dragged on
Her foul and wounded train, and men

Were trampled and deceived again,
 And words and shews again could bind 705
 The wailing tribes of human kind
 In scorn and famine. Fire and blood
 Raged round the raging multitude,
 To fields remote by tyrants sent
 To be the scornèd instrument 710
 With which they drag from mines of gore
 The chains their slaves yet ever wore:
 And in the streets men met each other,
 And by old altars and in halls,
 And smiled again at festivals. 715
 But each man found in his heart's brother
 Cold cheer; for all, though half deceived,
 The outworn creeds again believed,
 And the same round anew began,
 Which the weary world yet ever ran. 720

Many then wept, not tears, but gall
 Within their hearts, like drops which fall
 Wasting the fountain-stone away.
 And in that dark and evil day
 Did all desires and thoughts, that claim 725
 Men's care—ambition, friendship, fame,
 Love, hope, though hope was now despair—
 Indue the colours of this change,
 As from the all-surrounding air
 The earth takes hues obscure and strange, 730
 When storm and earthquake linger there.

And so, my friend, it then befell
 To many, most to Lionel,
 Whose hope was like the life of youth
 Within him, and when dead, became 735
 A spirit of unresting flame,
 Which goaded him in his distress
 Over the world's vast wilderness.
 Three years he left his native land,
 And on the fourth, when he returned, 740
 None knew him: he was stricken deep

With some disease of mind, and turned
Into aught unlike Lionel.

On him, on whom, did he pause in sleep,
Serenest smiles were wont to keep,

745

And, did he wake, a wingèd band
Of bright persuasions, which had fed
On his sweet lips and liquid eyes,
Kept their swift pinions half outspread,
To do on men his least command;

750

On him, whom once 'twas paradise
Even to behold, now misery lay:
In his own heart 'twas merciless,
To all things else none may express
Its innocence and tenderness.

755

'Twas said that he had refuge sought
In love from his unquiet thought
In distant lands, and been deceived
By some strange shew; for there were found,
Blotted with tears as those relieved
By their own words are wont to do,
These mournful verses on the ground,
By all who read them blotted too.

760

"How am I changed! my hopes were once like fire:
I loved, and I believed that life was love.

765

How am I lost! on wings of swift desire
Among Heaven's winds my spirit once did move.
I slept, and silver dreams did aye inspire
My liquid sleep: I woke, and did approve
All nature to my heart, and thought to make
A paradise of earth for one sweet sake.

770

"I love, but I believe in love no more.
I feel desire, but hope not. O, from sleep
Most vainly must my weary brain implore
Its long lost flattery now: I wake to weep,
And sit through the long day gnawing the core
Of my bitter heart, and, like a miser, keep,
Since none in what I feel take pain or pleasure,
To my own soul its self-consuming treasure."

775

He dwelt beside me near the sea: 780
 And oft in evening did we meet,
 When the waves, beneath the starlight, flee
 O'er the yellow sands with silver feet,
 And talked: our talk was sad and sweet,
 Till slowly from his mien there passed 785
 The desolation which it spoke;
 And smiles,—as when the lightning's blast
 Has parched some heaven-delighting oak,
 The next spring shews leaves pale and rare,
 But like flowers delicate and fair, 790
 On its rent boughs,—again arrayed
 His countenance in tender light:
 His words grew subtile fire, which made
 The air his hearers breathed delight:
 His motions, like the winds, were free, 795
 Which bend the bright grass gracefully,
 Then fade away in circlets faint:
 And wingèd hope, on which upborne
 His soul seemed hovering in his eyes,
 Like some bright spirit newly born 800
 Floating amid the sunny skies,
 Sprang forth from his rent heart anew.
 Yet o'er his talk, and looks, and mien,
 Tempering their loveliness too keen,
 Past woe its shadow backward threw, 805
 Till like an exhalation, spread
 From flowers half drunk with evening dew,
 They did become infectious: sweet
 And subtile mists of sense and thought:
 Which wrapt us soon, when we might meet, 810
 Almost from our own looks and aught
 The wide world holds. And so, his mind
 Was healed, while mine grew sick with fear:
 For ever now his health declined,
 Like some frail bark which cannot bear 815
 The impulse of an altered wind,
 Though prosperous: and my heart grew full
 'Mid its new joy of a new care:
 For his cheek became, not pale, but fair,

As rose-o'ershadowed lilies are; 830
And soon his deep and sunny hair,
In this alone less beautiful,
Like grass in tombs grew wild and rare.
The blood in his translucent veins
Beat, not like animal life, but love 835
Seemed now its sullen springs to move,
When life had failed, and all its pains:
And sudden sleep would seize him oft
Like death, so calm, but that a tear,
His pointed eye-lashes between, 830
Would gather in the light serene
Of smiles, whose lustre bright and soft
Beneath lay undulating there.
His breath was like inconstant flame,
As eagerly it went and came; 835
And I hung o'er him in his sleep,
Till, like an image in the lake
Which rains disturb, my tears would break
The shadow of that slumber deep:
Then he would bid me not to weep, 840
And say with flattery false, yet sweet,
That death and he could never meet,
If I would never part with him.
And so we loved, and did unite
All that in us was yet divided: 845
For when he said, that many a rite,
By men to bind but once provided,
Could not be shared by him and me,
Or they would kill him in their glee,
I shuddered, and then laughing said—
"We will have rites our faith to bind, 850
But our church shall be the starry night,
Our altar the grassy earth outspread,
And our priest the muttering wind."

'Twas sunset as I spoke: one star 855
Had scarce burst forth, when from afar
The ministers of misrule sent,
Seized upon Lionel, and bore

His chained limbs to a dreary tower,
 In the midst of a city vast and wide. 860
 For he, they said, from his mind had bent
 Against their gods keen blasphemy,
 For which, though his soul must roasted be
 In hell's red lakes immortally,
 Yet even on earth must he abide 865
 The vengeance of their slaves: a trial,
 I think, men call it. What avail
 Are prayers and tears, which chase denial
 From the fierce savage, nursed in hate?
 What the knit soul that pleading and pale 870
 Makes wan the quivering cheek, which late
 It painted with its own delight?
 We were divided. As I could,
 I stilled the tingling of my blood,
 And followed him in their despite, 875
 As a widow follows, pale and wild,
 The murderers and corpse of her only child;
 And when we came to the prison door
 And I prayed to share his dungeon floor
 With prayers which rarely have been spurned, 880
 And when men drove me forth and I
 Stared with blank frenzy on the sky,
 A farewell look of love he turned,
 Half calming me; then gazed awhile,
 As if thro' that black and massy pile, 885
 And thro' the crowd around him there,
 And thro' the dense and murky air,
 And the thronged streets, he did espy
 What poets know and prophesy;
 And said, with voice that made them shiver 890
 And clung like music in my brain,
 And which the mute walls spoke again
 Prolonging it with deepened strain:
 "Fear not the tyrants shall rule for ever,
 Or the priests of the bloody faith; 895
 They stand on the brink of that mighty river,
 Whose waves they have tainted with death:
 It is fed from the depths of a thousand dells,

Around them it foams, and rages, and swells,
And their swords and their sceptres I floating see, 900
Like wrecks in the surge of eternity."

I dwelt beside the prison gate,
And the strange crowd that out and in
Passed, some, no doubt, with mine own fate,
Might have fretted me with its ceaseless din, 905
But the fever of care was louder within.
Soon, but too late, in penitence
Or fear, his foes released him thence:
I saw his thin and languid form,
As leaning on the jailor's arm, 910
Whose hardened eyes grew moist the while,
To meet his mute and faded smile,
And hear his words of kind farewell,
He tottered forth from his damp cell.
Many had never wept before, 915
From whom fast tears then gushed and fell:
Many will relent no more,
Who sobbed like infants then: aye, all
Who thronged the prison's stony hall,
The rulers or the slaves of law, 920
Felt with a new surprise and awe
That they were human, till strong shame
Made them again become the same.
The prison blood-hounds, huge and grim,
From human looks the infection caught, 925
And fondly crouched and fawned on him;
And men have heard the prisoners say,
Who in their rotting dungeons lay,
That from that hour, throughout one day,
The fierce despair and hate which kept 930
Their trampled bosoms almost slept,
When, like twin vultures, they hung feeding
On each heart's wound, wide torn and bleeding,
Because their jailors' rule, they thought,
Grew merciful, like a parent's sway. 935

I know not how, but we were free;
And Lionel sate alone with me,

As the carriage drove thro' the streets apace;
And we looked upon each other's face;
And the blood in our fingers intertwined 940
Ran like the thoughts of a single mind,
As the swift emotions went and came
Thro' the veins of each united frame.
So thro' the long long streets we past
Of the million-peopled City vast; 945
Which is that desart, where each one
Seeks his mate yet is alone,
Beloved and sought and mourned of none;
Until the clear blue sky was seen,
And the grassy meadows bright and green, 950
And then I sunk in his embrace,
Enclosing there a mighty space
Of love: and so we travelled on
By woods, and fields of yellow flowers,
And towns, and villages, and towers, 955
Day after day of happy hours.
It was the azure time of June,
When the skies are deep in the stainless noon,
And the warm and fitful breezes shake
The fresh green leaves of the hedge-row briar, 960
And there were odours then to make
The very breath we did respire
A liquid element, whereon
Our spirits, like delighted things
That walk the air on subtle wings, 965
Floated and mingled far away,
'Mid the warm winds of the sunny day.
And when the evening star came forth
Above the curve of the new bent moon,
And light and sound ebbed from the earth, 970
Like the tide of the full and weary sea
To the depths of its tranquillity,
Our natures to its own repose
Did the earth's breathless sleep attune:
Like flowers, which on each other close 975
Their languid leaves when day-light's gone,
We lay, till new emotions came,

Which seemed to make each mortal frame
One soul of interwoven flame,
A life in life, a second birth 980
In worlds diviner far than earth,
Which, like two strains of harmony
That mingle in the silent sky
Then slowly disunite, past by
And left the tenderness of tears, 985
A soft oblivion of all fears,
A sweet sleep: so we travelled on
Till we came to the home of Lionel,
Among the mountains wild and lone,
Beside the hoary western sea, 990
Which near the verge of the echoing shore
The massy forest shadowed o'er.

The ancient steward, with hair all hoar,
As we alighted, wept to see
His master changed so fearfully; 995
And the old man's sobs did waken me
From my dream of unremaining gladness;
The truth flashed o'er me like quick madness
When I looked, and saw that there was death
On Lionel: yet day by day 1000
He lived, till fear grew hope and faith,
And in my soul I dared to say,
Nothing so bright can pass away:
Death is dark, and foul, and dull,
But he is—O how beautiful! 1005
Yet day by day he grew more weak,
And his sweet voice, when he might speak,
Which ne'er was loud, became more low;
And the light which flashed through his waxen cheek
Grew faint, as the rose-like hues which flow 1010
From sunset o'er the Alpine snow:
And death seemed not like death in him,
For the spirit of life o'er every limb
Lingered, a mist of sense and thought.
When the summer wind faint odours brought 1015
From mountain flowers, even as it passed

His cheek would change, as the noon-day sea
 Which the dying breeze sweeps fitfully.
 If but a cloud the sky o'ercast,
 You might see his colour come and go, 1020
 And the softest strain of music made
 Sweet smiles, yet sad, arise and fade
 Amid the dew of his tender eyes;
 And the breath, with intermitting flow,
 Made his pale lips quiver and part. 1025
 You might hear the beatings of his heart,
 Quick, but not strong; and with my tresses
 When oft he playfully would bind
 In the bowers of mossy lonelineses
 His neck, and win me so to mingle 1030
 In the sweet depth of woven caresses,
 And our faint limbs were intertwined,
 Alas! the unquiet life did tingle
 From mine own heart through every vein,
 Like a captive in dreams of liberty, 1035
 Who beats the walls of his stony cell.
 But his, it seemed already free,
 Like the shadow of fire surrounding me!
 On my faint eyes and limbs did dwell
 That spirit as it passed, till soon, 1040
 As a frail cloud wandering o'er the moon,
 Beneath its light invisible,
 Is seen when it folds its grey wings again
 To alight on midnight's dusky plain,
 I lived and saw, and the gathering soul 1045
 Passed from beneath that strong controul,
 And I fell on a life which was sick with fear
 Of all the woe that now I bear.

Amid a bloomless myrtle wood,
 On a green and sea-girt promontory, 1050
 Not far from where we dwelt, there stood
 In record of a sweet sad story,
 An altar and a temple bright
 Circled by steps, and o'er the gate
 Was sculptured, "To Fidelity;" 1055

And in the shrine an image sate,
 All veiled: but there was seen the light
 Of smiles, which faintly could express
 A mingled pain and tenderness
 Through that ætherial drapery. 1060
 The left hand held the head, the right—
 Beyond the veil, beneath the skin,
 You might see the nerves quivering within—
 Was forcing the point of a barbèd dart
 Into its side-convulsing heart. 1065
 An unskilled hand, yet one informed
 With genius, had the marble warmed
 With that pathetic life. This tale
 It told: A dog had from the sea,
 When the tide was raging fearfully, 1070
 Dragged Lionel's mother, weak and pale,
 Then died beside her on the sand,
 And she that temple thence had planned;
 But it was Lionel's own hand
 Had wrought the image. Each new moon 1075
 That lady did, in this lone fane,
 The rites of a religion sweet,
 Whose god was in her heart and brain:
 The seasons' loveliest flowers were strewn
 On the marble floor beneath her feet, 1080
 And she brought crowns of sea-buds white,
 Whose odour is so sweet and faint,
 And weeds, like branching chrysolite,
 Woven in devices fine and quaint,
 And tears from her brown eyes did stain 1085
 The altar: need but look upon
 That dying statue, fair and wan,
 If tears should cease, to weep again:
 And rare Arabian odours came,
 Though the myrtle copses steaming thence 1090
 From the hissing frankincense,
 Whose smoke, wool-white as ocean foam,
 Hung in dense flocks beneath the dome,
 That ivory dome, whose azure night
 With golden stars, like heaven, was bright 1095

O'er the split cedar's pointed flame;
And the lady's harp would kindle there
The melody of an old air,
Softer than sleep; the villagers
Mixt their religion up with her's, 1100
And as they listened round, shed tears.

One eve he led me to this fane:
Daylight on its last purple cloud
Was lingering grey, and soon her strain
The nightingale began; now loud, 1105
Climbing in circles the windless sky,
Now dying music; suddenly
'Tis scattered in a thousand notes,
And now to the hushed ear it floats
Like field smells known in infancy, 1110
Then failing, soothes the air again.
We sate within that temple lone,
Pavilioned round with Parian stone:
His mother's harp stood near, and oft
I had awakened music soft 1115
Amid its wires: the nightingale
Was pausing in her heaven-taught tale:
"Now drain the cup," said Lionel,
"Which the poet-bird has crowned so well
With the wine of her bright and liquid song! 1120
Heardst thou not sweet words among
That heaven-resounding minstrelsy?
Heardst thou not, that those who die
Awake in a world of ecstasy?
That love, when limbs are interwoven, 1125
And sleep, when the night of life is cloven,
And thought, to the world's dim boundaries clinging,
And music, when one beloved is singing,
Is death? Let us drain right joyously
The cup which the sweet bird fills for me." 1130
He paused, and to my lips he bent
His own: like spirit his words went
Through all my limbs with the speed of fire;
And his keen eyes, glittering through mine,

Filled me with the flame divine, 1135
Which in their orbs was burning far,
Like the light of an unmeasured star,
In the sky of midnight dark and deep :
Yes, 'twas his soul that did inspire
Sounds, which my skill could ne'er awaken ; 1140
And first, I felt my fingers sweep
The harp, and a long quivering cry
Burst from my lips in symphony :
The dusk and solid air was shaken,
As swift and swifter the notes came 1145
From my teuch, that wandered like quick flame,
And from my bosom, labouring
With some unutterable thing :
The awful sound of my own voice made
My faint lips tremble, in some mood 1150
Of wordless thought Lionel stood
So pale, that even beside his cheek
The snowy column from its shade
Caught whiteness : yet his countenance
Raised upward, burned with radiance 1155
Of spirit-piercing joy, whose light,
Like the moon struggling through the night
Of whirlwind-rifted clouds, did break
With beams that might not be confined.
I paused, but soon his gestures kindled 1160
New power, as by the moving wind
The waves are lifted, and my song
To low soft notes now changed and dwindled,
And from the twinkling wires among,
My languid fingers drew and flung 1165
Circles of life-dissolving sound,
Yet faint : in aery rings they bound
My Lionel, who, as every strain
Grew fainter but more sweet, his mien
Sunk with the sound relaxedly ; 1170
And slowly now he turned to me,
As slowly faded from his face
That awful joy : with look serene
He was soon drawn to my embrace,

And my wild song then died away 1175
 In murmurs: words I dare not say,
 We mixed, and on his lips mine fed
 Till they methought felt still and cold:
 "What is it with thee, love?" I said:
 No word, no look, no motion! yes, 1180
 There was a change, but spare to guess,
 Nor let that moment's hope be told.
 I looked, and knew that he was dead,
 And fell, as the eagle on the plain
 Falls when life deserts her brain, 1185
 And the mortal lightning is veiled again.

O that I were now dead! but such
 (Did they not, love, demand too much,
 Those dying murmurs?) he forebade.
 O that I once again were mad! 1190
 And yet, dear Rosalind, not so,
 For I would live to share thy woe.
 Sweet boy, did I forget thee too?
 Alas, we know not what we do
 When we speak words.

No memory more 1195

Is in my mind of that sea shore.
 Madness came on me, and a troop
 Of misty shapes did seem to sit
 Beside me, on a vessel's poop,
 And the clear north wind was driving it. 1200
 Then I heard strange tongues, and saw strange flowers,
 And the stars methought grew unlike ours,
 And the azure sky and the stormless sea
 Made me believe that I had died,
 And waked in a world, which was to me 1205
 Drear hell, though heaven to all beside:
 Then a dead sleep fell on my mind,
 Whilst animal life many long years
 Had rescue from a chasm of tears;
 And when I woke, I wept to find 1210
 That the same lady, bright and wise,
 With silver locks and quick brown eyes,

The mother of my Lionel,
 Had tended me in my distress,
 And died some months before. Nor less 1215
 Wonder, but far more peace and joy
 Brought in that hour my lovely boy;
 For through that trance my soul had well
 The impress of thy being kept;
 And if I waked, or if I slept, 1220
 No doubt, though memory faithless be,
 Thy image ever dwelt on me;
 And thus, O Lionel, like thee
 Is our sweet child. 'Tis sure most strange
 I knew not of so great a change, 1225
 As that which gave him birth, who now
 Is all the solace of my woe.

That Lionel great wealth had left
 By will to me, and that of all
 The ready lies of law bereft 1230
 My child and me, might well befall.
 But let me think not of the scorn,
 Which from the meanest I have borne,
 When, for my child's beloved sake,
 I mixed with slaves, to vindicate 1235
 The very laws themselves do make:
 Let me not say scorn is my fate,
 Lest I be proud, suffering the same
 With those who live in deathless fame. 1239

She ceased.—“Lo, where red morning thro’ the woods
 Is burning o’er the dew;” said Rosalind.
 And with these words they rose, and towards the flood
 Of the blue lake, beneath the leaves now wind
 With equal steps and fingers intertwined:
 Thence to a lonely dwelling, where the shore 1245
 Is shadowed with steep rocks, and cypresses
 Cleave with their dark green cones the silent skies,
 And with their shadows the clear depths below,
 And where a little terrace from its bowers,
 Of blooming myrtle and faint lemon-flowers, 1250

Scatters its sense-dissolving fragrance o'er
 The liquid marble of the windless lake;
 And where the agèd forest's limbs look hoar,
 Under the leaves which their green garments make,
 They come: 'tis Helen's home, and clean and white, 1255
 Like one which tyrants spare on our own land
 In some such solitude, its casements bright
 Shone through their vine-leaves in the morning sun,
 And even within 'twas scarce like Italy.
 And when she saw how all things there were planned, 1260
 As in an English home, dim memory
 Disturbed poor Rosalind: she stood as one
 Whose mind is where his body cannot be,
 Till Helen led her where her child yet slept,
 And said, "Observe, that brow was Lionel's, 1265
 Those lips were his, and so he ever kept
 One arm in sleep, pillowing his head with it.
 You cannot see his eyes, they are two wells
 Of liquid love: let us not wake him yet."
 But Rosalind could bear no more, and wept 1270
 A shower of burning tears, which fell upon
 His face, and so his opening lashes shone
 With tears unlike his own, as he did leap
 In sudden wonder from his innocent sleep.

So Rosalind and Helen lived together 1275
 Thenceforth, changed in all else, yet friends again,
 Such as they were, when o'er the mountain heather
 They wandered in their youth, through sun and rain.
 And after many years, for human things
 Change even like the ocean and the wind, 1280
 Her daughter was restored to Rosalind,
 And in their circle thence some visitings
 Of joy 'mid their new calm would intervene:
 A lovely child she was, of looks serene,
 And motions which o'er things indifferent shed 1285
 The grace and gentleness from whence they came.
 And Helen's boy grew with her, and they fed
 From the same flowers of thought, until each mind
 Like springs which mingle in one flood became,

And in their union soon their parents saw 1290
The shadow of the peace denied to them.
And Rosalind, for when the living stem
Is cankered in its heart, the tree must fall,
Died ere her time; and with deep grief and awe
The pale survivors followed her remains 1295
Beyond the region of dissolving rains,
Up the cold mountain she was wont to call
Her tomb; and on Chiavenna's precipice
They raised a pyramid of lasting ice,
Whose polished sides, ere day had yet begun, 1300
Caught the first glow of the unrisen sun,
The last, when it had sunk; and thro' the night
The charioteers of Arctos wheelèd round
Its glittering point, as seen from Helen's home,
Whose sad inhabitants each year would come, 1305
With willing steps climbing that rugged height,
And hang long locks of hair, and garlands bound
With amaranth flowers, which, in the clime's despite,
Filled the frore air with unaccustomed light:
Such flowers, as in the wintry memory bloom 1310
Of one friend left, adorned that frozen tomb.

Helen, whose spirit was of softer mould,
Whose sufferings too were less, death slower led
Into the peace of his dominion cold:
She died among her kindred, being old. 1315
And know, that if love die not in the dead
As in the living, none of mortal kind
Are blest, as now Helen and Rosalind.

LINES

WRITTEN AMONG THE EUGANEAN HILLS,

OCTOBER, 1818.

MANY a green isle needs must be
 In the deep wide sea of misery,
 Or the mariner, worn and wan,
 Never thus could voyage on
 Day and night, and night and day, 5
 Drifting on his dreary way,
 With the solid darkness black
 Closing round his vessel's track;
 Whilst above the sunless sky,
 Big with clouds, hangs heavily, 10
 And behind the tempest fleet
 Hurries on with lightning feet,
 Riving sail, and cord, and plank,
 Till the ship has almost drank
 Death from the o'er-brimming deep; 15
 And sinks down, down, like that sleep
 When the dreamer seems to be
 Weltering through eternity;
 And the dim low line before
 Of a dark and distant shore 20
 Still recedes, as ever still
 Longing with divided will,
 But no power to seek or shun,
 He is ever drifted on
 O'er the unrepousing wave 25
 To the haven of the grave.

What, if there no friends will greet;
 What, if there no heart will meet
 His with love's impatient beat;
 Wander wheresoe'er he may, 30
 Can he dream before that day
 To find refuge from distress
 In friendship's smile, in love's caress?
 Then 'twill wreak him little woe
 Whether such there be or no: 35
 Senseless is the breast, and cold,
 Which relenting love would fold;
 Bloodless are the veins and chill
 Which the pulse of pain did fill;
 Every little living nerve 40
 That from bitter words did swerve
 Round the tortured lips and brow,
 Are like sapless leaflets now
 Frozen upon December's bough.
 On the beach of a northern sea 45
 Which tempests shake eternally,
 As once the wretch there lay to sleep,
 Lies a solitary heap,
 One white skull and seven dry bones,
 On the margin of the stones, 50
 Where a few grey rushes stand,
 Boundaries of the sea and land:
 Nor is heard one voice of wail
 But the sea-mews, as they sail
 O'er the billows of the gale; 55
 Or the whirlwind up and down
 Howling, like a slaughtered town,
 When a king in glory rides
 Through the pomp of fratricides:
 Those unburied bones around 60
 There is many a mournful sound;
 There is no lament for him,
 Like a sunless vapour, dim,
 Who once clothed with life and thought
 What now moves nor murmurs not. 65

<p> Aye, many flowering islands lie In the waters of wide Agony: To such a one this morn was led, My bark by soft winds piloted: 'Mid the mountains Euganean </p>	<p>70</p>
<p> I stood listening to the pæan, With which the legioned rooks did hail The sun's uprise majestic; Gathering round with wings all hoar, Thro' the dewy mist they soar </p>	<p>75</p>
<p> Like grey shades, till the eastern heaven Bursts, and then, as clouds of even, Flecked with fire and azure, lie In the unfathomable sky, So their plumes of purple grain, </p>	<p>80</p>
<p> Starred with drops of golden rain, Gleam above the sunlight woods, As in silent multitudes On the morning's fitful gale Thro' the broken mist they sail, </p>	<p>85</p>
<p> And the vapours cloven and gleaming Follow down the dark steep streaming, Till all is bright, and clear, and still, Round the solitary hill. </p>	
<p> Beneath is spread like a green sea The waveless plain of Lombardy, Bounded by the vaporous air, Islanded by cities fair; Underneath day's azure eyes </p>	<p>90</p>
<p> Ocean's nursling, Venice lies, A peopled labyrinth of walls, Amphitrite's destined halls, Which her hoary sire now paves With his blue and beaming waves. </p>	<p>95</p>
<p> Lo! the sun upsprings behind, Broad, red, radiant, half reclined On the level quivering line Of the waters crystalline; And before that chasm of light, </p>	<p>100</p>

As within a furnace bright, 105
 Column, tower, and dome, and spire,
 Shine like obelisks of fire,
 Pointing with inconstant motion
 From the altar of dark ocean
 To the sapphire-tinted skies ; 110
 As the flames of sacrifice
 From the marble shrines did rise,
 As to pierce the dome of gold
 Where Apollo spoke of old.

Sun-girt City, thou hast been 115
 Ocean's child, and then his queen ;
 Now is come a darker day,
 And thou soon must be his prey,
 If the power that raised thee here
 Hallow so thy watery bier. 120

A less drear ruin then than now,
 With thy conquest-branded brow
 Stooping to the slave of slaves
 From thy throne, among the waves
 Wilt thou be, when the sea-mew 125
 Flies, as once before it flew,
 O'er thine isles depopulate,

And all is in its antient state,
 Save where many a palace gate
 With green sea-flowers overgrown 130
 Like a rock of ocean's own,

Topples o'er the abandoned sea
 As the tides change sullenly.
 The fisher on his watery way,
 Wandering at the close of day, 135
 Will spread his sail and seize his oar
 Till he pass the gloomy shore,
 Lest thy dead should, from their sleep
 Bursting o'er the starlight deep,
 Lead a rapid masque of death 140
 O'er the waters of his path.

Those who alone thy towers behold
 Quivering through aerial gold,

As I now behold them here,
 Would imagine not they were 145
 Sepulchres, where human forms,
 Like pollution-nourished worms
 To the corpse of greatness cling,
 Murdered, and now mouldering:
 But if Freedom should awake 150
 In her omnipotence, and shake
 From the Celtic Anarch's hold
 All the keys of dungeons cold,
 Where a hundred cities lie
 Chained like thee, ingloriously, 155
 Thou and all thy sister band
 Might adorn this sunny land,
 Twining memories of old time
 With new virtues more sublime;
 If not, perish thou and they, 160
 - Clouds which stain truth's rising day
 By her sun consumed away,
 Earth can spare ye: while like flowers,
 In the waste of years and hours,
 From your dust new nations spring 165
 With more kindly blossoming.
 Perish—let there only be
 Floating o'er thy hearthless sea
 As the garment of thy sky
 Clothes the world immortally, 170
 One remembrance, more sublime
 Than the tattered pall of time,
 Which scarce hides thy visage wan;—
 That a tempest-cleaving Swan
 Of the songs of Albion, 175
 Driven from his ancestral streams
 By the might of evil dreams,
 Found a nest in thee; and Ocean
 Welcomed him with such emotion
 That its joy grew his, and sprung 180
 From his lips like music flung
 O'er a mighty thunder-fit
 Chastening terror:—what though yet

Poesy's unfailing River,
 Which thro' Albion winds for ever 185
 Lashing with melodious wave
 Many a sacred Poet's grave,
 Mourn its latest nursling fled?
 What though thou with all thy dead
 Scarce can for this fame repay 190
 Aught thine own? oh, rather say
 Though thy sins and slaveries foul
 Overcloud a sunlike soul?
 As the ghost of Homer clings
 Round Scamander's wasting springs; 195
 As divinest Shakespeare's might
 Fills Avon and the world with light
 Like omniscient power which he
 Imaged 'mid mortality;
 As the love from Petrarch's urn, 200
 Yet amid yon hills doth burn,
 A quenchless lamp by which the heart
 Sees things unearthly;—so thou art
 Mighty spirit—so shall be
 The City that did refuge thee. 205

Lo, the sun floats up the sky
 Like thought-wingèd Liberty,
 Till the universal light
 Seems to level plain and height;
 From the sea a mist has spread, 210
 And the beams of morn lie dead
 On the towers of Venice now,
 Like its glory long ago.
 By the skirts of that grey cloud
 Many-domèd Padua proud 215
 Stands, a peopled solitude,
 'Mid the harvest-shining plain,
 Where the peasant heaps his grain
 In the garner of his foe,
 And the milk-white oxen slow 220
 With the purple vintage strain,
 Heaped upon the creaking wain,

That the brutal Celt may swill
 Drunken sleep with savage will;
 And the sickle to the sword 225
 Lies unchanged, though many a lord,
 Like a weed whose shade is poison,
 Overgrows this region's foison,
 Sheaves of whom are ripe to come
 To destruction's harvest home: 230
 Men must reap the things they sow,
 Force from force must ever flow,
 Or worse; but 'tis a bitter woe
 That love or reason cannot change
 The despot's rage, the slave's revenge. 235

Padua, thou within whose walls
 Those mute guests at festivals,
 Son and Mother, Death and Sin,
 Played at dice for Ezzelin,
 Till Death cried, "I win, I win!" 240
 And Sin cursed to lose the wager,
 But Death promised, to assuage her,
 That he would petition for
 Her to be made Vice-Emperor,
 When the destined years were o'er, 245
 Over all between the Po
 And the eastern Alpine snow,
 Under the mighty Austrian.
 Sin smiled so as Sin only can,
 And since that time, aye, long before, 250
 Both have ruled from shore to shore,
 That incestuous pair, who follow
 Tyrants as the sun the swallow,
 As Repentance follows Crime,
 And as changes follow Time. 255

In thine halls the lamp of learning,
 Padua, now no more is burning;
 Like a meteor, whose wild way
 Is lost over the grave of day,
 It gleams betrayed and to betray: 260

Once remotest nations came
 To adore that sacred flame,
 When it lit not many a hearth
 On this cold and gloomy earth:
 Now new fires from antique light
 Spring beneath the wide world's might;
 But their spark lies dead in thee,
 Trampled out by tyranny.

265

As the Norway woodman quells,
 In the depth of piny dells,
 One light flame among the brakes,
 While the boundless forest shakes,
 And its mighty trunks are torn
 By the fire thus lowly born:

270

The spark beneath his feet is dead,
 He starts to see the flames it fed
 Howling through the darkened sky
 With a myriad tongues victoriously,
 And sinks down in fear: so thou,
 O Tyranny, beholdest now
 Light around thee, and thou hearest
 The loud flames ascend, and fearest:
 Grovel on the earth: aye, hide
 In the dust thy purple pride!

275

280

Noon descends around me now:
 'Tis the noon of autumn's glow,
 When a soft and purple mist
 Like a vaporous amethyst,
 Or an air-dissolvèd star
 Mingling light and fragrance, far
 From the curved horizon's bound
 To the point of heaven's profound,
 Fills the overflowing sky;
 And the plains that silent lie
 Underneath, the leaves unsodden
 Where the infant frost has trodden
 With his morning-wingèd feet,
 Whose bright print is gleaming yet;
 And the red and golden vines,

285

290

295

Piercing with their trellised lines 300
 The rough, dark-skirted wilderness;
 The dun and bladed grass no less,
 Pointing from this hoary tower
 In the windless air; the flower
 Glimmering at my feet; the line 305
 Of the olive-sandalled Apennine
 In the south dimly islanded;
 And the Alps, whose snows are spread
 High between the clouds and sun;
 And of living things each one; 310
 And my spirit which so long
 Darkened this swift stream of song,
 Interpenetrated lie
 By the glory of the sky:
 Be it love, light, harmony, 315
 Odour, or the soul of all
 Which from heaven like dew doth fall,
 Or the mind which feeds this verse
 Peopling the lone universe.
 Noon descends, and after noon 320
 Autumn's evening meets me soon,
 Leading the infantine moon,
 And that one star, which to her
 Almost seems to minister
 Half the crimson light she brings 325
 From the sunset's radiant springs:
 And the soft dreams of the morn,
 (Which like wingèd winds had borne
 To that silent isle, which lies
 'Mid remembered agonies, 330
 The frail bark of this lone being,)
 Pass, to other sufferers fleeing,
 And its ancient pilot, Pain,
 Sits beside the helm again.

Other flowering isles must be 335
 In the sea of life and agony:
 Other spirits float and flee
 O'er that gulph: even now, perhaps,

On some rock the wild wave wraps,
 With folded wings they waiting sit 340
 For my bark, to pilot it
 To some calm and blooming cove,
 Where for me, and those I love,
 May a windless bower be built,
 Far from passion, pain, and guilt, 345
 In a dell 'mid lawny hills,
 Which the wild sea-murmur fills,
 And soft sunshine, and the sound
 Of old forests echoing round,
 And the light and smell divine 350
 Of all flowers that breathe and shine:
 We may live so happy there,
 That the spirits of the air,
 Envyng us, may even entice
 To our healing paradise 355
 The polluting multitude;
 But their rage would be subdued
 By that clime divine and calm,
 And the winds whose wings rain balm
 On the uplifted soul, and leaves 360
 Under which the bright sea heaves;
 While each breathless interval
 In their whisperings musical
 The inspired soul supplies
 With its own deep melodies, 365
 And the love which heals all strife
 Circling, like the breath of life,
 All things in that sweet abode
 With its own mild brotherhood:
 They, not it would change; and soon 370
 Every sprite beneath the moon
 Would repent its envy vain,
 And the earth grow young again.

HYMN

TO

INTELLECTUAL BEAUTY.

1.

THE awful shadow of some unseen Power
 Floats tho' unseen amongst us,—visiting
 This various world with as inconstant wing
 As summer winds that creep from flower to flower,—
 Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain shower,
 It visits with inconstant glance
 Each human heart and countenance;
 Like hues and harmonies of evening,—
 Like clouds in starlight widely spread,—
 Like memory of music fled,—
 Like aught that for its grace may be
 Dear, and yet dearer for its mystery.

2.

Spirit of BEAUTY, that dost consecrate
 With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon
 Of human thought or form,—where art thou gone?
 Why dost thou pass away and leave our state,
 This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate?
 Ask why the sunlight not for ever
 Weaves rainbows o'er yon mountain river,
 Why aught should fail and fade that once is shewn,
 Why fear and dream and death and birth
 Cast on the daylight of this earth
 Such gloom,—why man has such a scope
 For love and hate, despondency and hope?

3.

No voice from some sublimer world hath ever

To sage or poet these responses given—

Therefore the names of Demon, Ghost, and Heaven,
Remain the records of their vain endeavour,
Frail spells—whose uttered charm might not avail to sever,
From all we hear and all we see,
Doubt, chance, and mutability.

Thy light alone—like mist o'er mountains driven,

Or music by the night wind sent,

Thro' strings of some still instrument,

Or moonlight on a midnight stream,

Gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream.

4.

Love, Hope, and Self-esteem, like clouds depart

And come, for some uncertain moments lent,

Man were immortal, and omnipotent,

Didst thou, unknown and awful as thou art,

Keep with thy glorious train firm state within his heart.

Thou messenger of sympathies,

That wax and wane in lovers' eyes—

Thou—that to human thought art nourishment,

Like darkness to a dying flame!

Depart not as thy shadow came,

Depart not—lest the grave should be,

Like life and fear, a dark reality.

5.

While yet a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped

Thro' many a listening chamber, cave and ruin,

And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing

Hopes of high talk with the departed dead.

I called on poisonous names with which our youth is fed,

I was not heard—I saw them not—

When musing deeply on the lot

Of life, at the sweet time when winds are wooing

All vital things that wake to bring

News of birds and blossoming,—

Sudden, thy shadow fell on me;

I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstasy!

6.

I vowed that I would dedicate my powers
To thee and thine—have I not kept the vow?
With beating heart and streaming eyes, even now
I call the phantoms of a thousand hours
Each from his voiceless grave: they have in visioned bowers
Of studious zeal or love's delight
Outwatched with me the envious night—
They know that never joy illumed my brow
Unlinked with hope that thou wouldst free
This world from its dark slavery,
That thou—O awful LOVELINESS,
Wouldst give whate'er these words cannot express.

7.

The day becomes more solemn and serene
When noon is past—there is a harmony
In autumn, and a lustre in its sky,
Which thro' the summer is not heard or seen,
As if it could not be, as if it had not been!
Thus let thy power, which like the truth
Of nature on my passive youth
Descended, to my onward life supply
Its calm—to one who worships thee,
And every form containing thee,
Whom, SPIRIT fair, thy spells did bind
To fear himself, and love all human kind.

SONNET.

OZYMANDIAS.

I MET a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed:
And on the pedestal these words appear:
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

THE CENCI:

A TRAGEDY IN FIVE ACTS.

DEDICATION

TO

LEIGH HUNT, Esq.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I inscribe with your name, from a distant country, and after an absence whose months have seemed years, this the latest of my literary efforts.

Those writings which I have hitherto published, have been little else than visions which impersonate my own apprehensions of the beautiful and the just. I can also perceive in them the literary defects incidental to youth and impatience; they are dreams of what ought to be, or may be. The drama which I now present to you is a sad reality. I lay aside the presumptuous attitude of an instructor, and am content to paint, with such colours as my own heart furnishes, that which has been.

Had I known a person more highly endowed than yourself with all that it becomes a man to possess, I had solicited for this work the ornament of his name. One more gentle, honourable, innocent and brave; one of more exalted toleration for all who do and think evil, and yet himself more free from evil; one who knows better how to receive, and how to confer a benefit though he must ever confer far more than he can receive; one of simpler, and, in the highest sense of the word, of purer life and

manners I never knew: and I had already been fortunate in friendships when your name was added to the list.

In that patient and irreconcilable enmity with domestic and political tyranny and imposture which the tenor of your life has illustrated, and which, had I health and talents, should illustrate mine, let us, comforting each other in our task, live and die.

All happiness attend you!

Your affectionate friend,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

ROME,
MAY 29, 1819.

P R E F A C E.

A MANUSCRIPT was communicated to me during my travels in Italy, which was copied from the archives of the Cenci Palace at Rome, and contains a detailed account of the horrors which ended in the extinction of one of the noblest and richest families of that city during the Pontificate of Clement VIII, in the year 1599. The story is, that an old man having spent his life in debauchery and wickedness, conceived at length an implacable hatred towards his children; which shewed itself towards one daughter under the form of an incestuous passion, aggravated by every circumstance of cruelty and violence. This daughter, after long and vain attempts to escape from what she considered a perpetual contamination both of body and mind, at length plotted with her mother-in-law and brother to murder their common tyrant. The young maiden who was urged to this tremendous deed by an impulse which overpowered its horror, was evidently a most gentle and amiable being, a creature formed to adorn and be admired, and thus violently thwarted from her nature by the necessity of circumstance and opinion. The deed was quickly discovered, and, in spite of the most earnest prayers made to the Pope by the highest persons in Rome, the criminals were put to death. The old man

had during his life repeatedly bought his pardon from the Pope for capital crimes of the most enormous and unspeakable kind, at the price of a hundred thousand crowns; the death therefore of his victims can scarcely be accounted for by the love of justice. The Pope, among other motives for severity, probably felt that whoever killed the Count Cenci deprived his treasury of a certain and copious source of revenue.¹ Such a story, if told so as to present to the reader all the feelings of those who once acted it, their hopes and fears, their confidences and misgivings, their various interests, passions and opinions, acting upon and with each other, yet all conspiring to one tremendous end, would be as a light to make apparent some of the most dark and secret caverns of the human heart.

On my arrival at Rome I found that the story of the Cenci was a subject not to be mentioned in Italian society without awakening a deep and breathless interest; and that the feelings of the company never failed to incline to a romantic pity for the wrongs, and a passionate exculpation of the horrible deed to which they urged her, who has been mingled two centuries with the common dust. All ranks of people knew the outlines of this history, and participated in the overwhelming interest which it seems to have the magic of exciting in the human heart. I had a copy of Guido's picture of Beatrice which is preserved in the Colonna Palace, and my servant instantly recognized it as the portrait of *La Cenci*.

This national and universal interest which the story produces and has produced for two centuries and among all ranks of people in a great City, where the imagination is kept for ever active and awake, first suggested to me the conception of its fitness for a dramatic purpose. In fact it is a tragedy which has already received from its capacity of awakening and sustaining the sympathy of men, approbation and success. Nothing remained as I imagined, but to clothe it to the apprehensions of my countrymen in such language and action

¹ The Papal Government formerly took the most extraordinary precautions against the publicity of facts which offer so tragical a demonstration of its own wickedness and weakness; so that the communication of the MS. had become, until very lately, a matter of some difficulty.

as would bring it home to their hearts. The deepest and the sublimest tragic compositions, *King Lear* and the two plays in which the tale of *Œdipus* is told, were stories which already existed in tradition, as matters of popular belief and interest, before *Shakspeare* and *Sophocles* made them familiar to the sympathy of all succeeding generations of mankind.

This story of the *Cenci* is indeed eminently fearful and monstrous: any thing like a dry exhibition of it on the stage would be insupportable. The person who would treat such a subject must increase the ideal, and diminish the actual horror of the events, so that the pleasure which arises from the poetry which exists in these tempestuous sufferings and crimes may mitigate the pain of the contemplation of the moral deformity from which they spring. There must also be nothing attempted to make the exhibition subservient to what is vulgarly termed a moral purpose. The highest moral purpose aimed at in the highest species of the drama, is the teaching the human heart, through its sympathies and antipathies, the knowledge of itself; in proportion to the possession of which knowledge, every human being is wise, just, sincere, tolerant and kind. If dogmas can do more, it is well: but a drama is no fit place for the enforcement of them. Undoubtedly, no person can be truly dishonoured by the act of another; and the fit return to make to the most enormous injuries is kindness and forbearance, and a resolution to convert the injurer from his dark passions by peace and love. Revenge, retaliation, atonement, are pernicious mistakes. If *Beatrice* had thought in this manner she would have been wiser and better; but she would never have been a tragic character: the few whom such an exhibition would have interested, could never have been sufficiently interested for a dramatic purpose, from the want of finding sympathy in their interest among the mass who surround them. It is in the restless and anatomizing casuistry with which men seek the justification of *Beatrice*, yet feel that she has done what needs justification; it is in the superstitious horror with which they contemplate alike her wrongs and their revenge; that the dramatic character of what she did and suffered, consists.

I have endeavoured as nearly as possible to represent the characters as they probably were, and have sought to avoid the error of making them actuated by my own conceptions of right or wrong, false or true: thus under a thin veil converting names and actions of the sixteenth century into cold impersonations of my own mind. They are represented as Catholics, and as Catholics deeply tinged with religion. To a Protestant apprehension there will appear something unnatural in the earnest and perpetual sentiment of the relations between God and men which pervade the tragedy of the Cenci. It will especially be startled at the combination of an undoubting persuasion of the truth of the popular religion with a cool and determined perseverance in enormous guilt. But religion in Italy is not, as in Protestant countries, a cloak to be worn on particular days; or a passport which those who do not wish to be railed at carry with them to exhibit; or a gloomy passion for penetrating the impenetrable mysteries of our being, which terrifies its possessor at the darkness of the abyss to the brink of which it has conducted him. Religion coexists, as it were, in the mind of an Italian Catholic, with a faith in that of which all men have the most certain knowledge. It is interwoven with the whole fabric of life. It is adoration, faith, submission, penitence, blind admiration; not a rule for moral conduct. It has no necessary connexion with any one virtue. The most atrocious villain may be rigidly devout, and without any shock to established faith, confess himself to be so. Religion pervades intensely the whole frame of society, and is according to the temper of the mind which it inhabits, a passion, a persuasion, an excuse, a refuge; never a check. Cenci himself built a chapel in the court of his Palace, and dedicated it to St. Thomas the Apostle, and established masses for the peace of his soul. Thus in the first scene of the fourth act Lucretia's design in exposing herself to the consequences of an expostulation with Cenci after having administered the opiate, was to induce him by a feigned tale to confess himself before death; this being esteemed by Catholics as essential to salvation; and she only relinquishes her purpose when she perceives that her perseverance would expose Beatrice to new outrages.

I have avoided with great care in writing this play the introduction of what is commonly called mere poetry, and I imagine there will scarcely be found a detached simile or a single isolated description, unless Beatrice's description of the chasm appointed for her father's murder should be judged to be of that nature.¹

In a dramatic composition the imagery and the passion should interpenetrate one another, the former being reserved simply for the full development and illustration of the latter. Imagination is as the immortal God which should assume flesh for the redemption of mortal passion. It is thus that the most remote and the most familiar imagery may alike be fit for dramatic purposes when employed in the illustration of strong feeling, which raises what is low, and levels to the apprehension that which is lofty, casting over all the shadow of its own greatness. In other respects, I have written more carelessly; that is, without an over-fastidious and learned choice of words. In this respect I entirely agree with those modern critics who assert that in order to move men to true sympathy we must use the familiar language of men, and that our great ancestors the antient English poets are the writers, a study of whom might incite us to do that for our own age which they have done for theirs. But it must be the real language of men in general and not that of any particular class to whose society the writer happens to belong. So much for what I have attempted; I need not be assured that success is a very different matter; particularly for one whose attention has but newly been awakened to the study of dramatic literature.

I endeavoured whilst at Rome to observe such monuments of this story as might be accessible to a stranger. The portrait of Beatrice at the Colonna Palace is admirable as a work of art: it was taken by Guido during her confinement in prison. But it is most interesting as a just representation of one of the loveliest specimens of the workmanship of Nature. There is a fixed and pale com-

¹ An idea in this speech was suggested by a most sublime passage in "*El Purgatorio de San Patricio*" of Calderon; the only plagiarism which I have intentionally committed in the whole piece.

posure upon the features: she seems sad and stricken down in spirit, yet the despair thus expressed is lightened by the patience of gentleness. Her head is bound with folds of white drapery from which the yellow strings of her golden hair escape, and fall about her neck. The moulding of her face is exquisitely delicate; the eyebrows are distinct and arched: the lips have that permanent meaning of imagination and sensibility which suffering has not repressed and which it seems as if death scarcely could extinguish. Her forehead is large and clear; her eyes which we are told were remarkable for their vivacity, are swollen with weeping and lustreless, but beautifully tender and serene. In the whole mien there is a simplicity and dignity which united with her exquisite loveliness and deep sorrow are inexpressibly pathetic. Beatrice Cenci appears to have been one of those rare persons in whom energy and gentleness dwell together without destroying one another: her nature was simple and profound. The crimes and miseries in which she was an actor and a sufferer are as the mask and the mantle in which circumstances clothed her for her impersonation on the scene of the world.

The Cenci Palace is of great extent; and though in part modernized, there yet remains a vast and gloomy pile of feudal architecture in the same state as during the dreadful scenes which are the subject of this tragedy. The Palace is situated in an obscure corner of Rome, near the quarter of the Jews, and from the upper windows you see the immense ruins of Mount Palatine half hidden under their profuse overgrowth of trees. There is a court in one part of the Palace (perhaps that in which Cenci built the Chapel to St. Thomas), supported by granite columns and adorned with antique friezes of fine workmanship, and built up, according to the antient Italian fashion, with balcony over balcony of open-work. One of the gates of the Palace formed of immense stones and leading through a passage, dark and lofty and opening into gloomy subterranean chambers, struck me particularly.

Of the Castle of Petrella, I could obtain no further information than that which is to be found in the manuscript.

THE CENCI.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

COUNT FRANCESCO CENCI.

GIACOMO, } his Sons.
BERNARDO, }

CARDINAL CAMILLO.

ORSINO, a Prelate.

SAVELLA, the Pope's Legate.

OLIMPIO, } Assassins.

MARZIO, }

ANDREA, Servant to Cenci.

Nobles—Judges—Guards—Servants.

LUCRETIA, Wife of Cenci, and Step-mother of his children.

BEATRICE, his Daughter.

The SCENE lies principally in Rome, but changes during the fourth Act to Petrella, a castle among the Apulian Apennines.

TIME. During the Pontificate of Clement VIII.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

AN APARTMENT IN THE CENCI PALACE. ENTER COUNT CENCI,
AND CARDINAL CAMILLO.

CAMILLO.

THAT matter of the murder is hushed up
If you consent to yield his Holiness
Your fief that lies beyond the Pincian gate.—
It needed all my interest in the conclave
To bend him to this point: he said that you 5
Bought perilous impunity with your gold;
That crimes like yours if once or twice compounded
Enriched the Church, and respited from hell
An erring soul which might repent and live:—
But that the glory and the interest 10
Of the high throne he fills, little consist

With making it a daily mart of guilt
As manifold and hideous as the deeds
Which you scarce hide from men's revolted eyes.

CENCI.

The third of my possessions—let it go! 15
Aye, I once heard the nephew of the Pope
Had sent his architect to view the ground,
Meaning to build a villa on my vines
The next time I compounded with his uncle:
I little thought he should outwit me so! 20
Henceforth no witness—not the lamp—shall see
That which the vassal threatened to divulge
Whose throat is choked with dust for his reward.
The deed he saw could not have rated higher
Than his most worthless life:—it angers me! 25
Respited me from Hell!—So may the Devil
Respite their souls from Heaven. No doubt Pope Clement,
And his most charitable nephews, pray
That the Apostle Peter and the saints
Will grant for their sake that I long enjoy 30
Strength, wealth, and pride, and lust, and length of days
Wherein to act the deeds which are the stewards
Of their revenue.—But much yet remains
To which they shew no title.

CAMILLO.

Oh, Count Cenci!

So much that thou mightst honourably live 35
And reconcile thyself with thine own heart
And with thy God, and with the offended world.
How hideously look deeds of lust and blood
Thro' those snow white and venerable hairs!—
Your children should be sitting round you now, 40
But that you fear to read upon their looks
The shame and misery you have written there.
Where is your wife? Where is your gentle daughter?
Methinks her sweet looks, which make all things else
Beauteous and glad, might kill the fiend within you. 45
Why is she barred from all society
But her own strange and uncomplaining wrongs?
Talk with me, Count,—you know I mean you well.

I stood beside your dark and fiery youth
 Watching its bold and bad career, as men 50
 Watch meteors, but it vanished not—I marked
 Your desperate and remorseless manhood; now
 Do I behold you in dishonoured age
 Charged with a thousand unrepented crimes.
 Yet I have ever hoped you would amend, 55
 And in that hope have saved your life three times.

CENCI.

For which Aldobrandino owes you now
 My fief beyond the Pincian.—Cardinal,
 One thing, I pray you, recollect henceforth,
 And so we shall converse with less restraint. 60
 A man you knew spoke of my wife and daughter—
 He was accustomed to frequent my house;
 So the next day *his* wife and daughter came
 And asked if I had seen him; and I smiled:
 I think they never saw him any more. 65

CAMILLO.

Thou execrable man, beware!—

CENCI.

Of thee?

Nay this is idle:—We should know each other.
 As to my character for what men call crime
 Seeing I please my senses as I list,
 And vindicate that right with force or guile, 70
 It is a public matter, and I care not
 If I discuss it with you. I may speak
 Alike to you and my own conscious heart—
 For you give out that you have half reformed me,
 Therefore strong vanity will keep you silent 75
 If fear should not; both will, I do not doubt.
 All men delight in sensual luxury,
 All men enjoy revenge; and most exult
 Over the tortures they can never feel—
 Flattering their secret peace with others' pain. 80
 But I delight in nothing else. I love
 The sight of agony, and the sense of joy,
 When this shall be another's, and that mine.
 And I have no remorse and little fear,

Which are, I think, the checks of other men. 85
This mood has grown upon me, until now
Any design my captious fancy makes
The picture of its wish, and it forms none
But such as men like you would start to know,
Is as my natural food and rest debarred 90
Until it be accomplished.

CAMILLO.

Art thou not

Most miserable?

CENCI.

Why, miserable?—

No.—I am what your theologians call
Hardened;—which they must be in impudence,
So to revile a man's peculiar taste. 95
True, I was happier than I am, while yet
Manhood remained to act the thing I thought;
While lust was sweeter than revenge; and now
Invention palls:—Aye, we must all grow old—
And but that there yet remains a deed to act 100
Whose horror might make sharp an appetite
Duller than mine—I'd do,—I know not what.
When I was young I thought of nothing else
But pleasure; and I fed on honey sweets:
Men, by St. Thomas! cannot live like bees, 105
And I grew tired:—yet, till I killed a foe,
And heard his groans, and heard his children's groans,
Knew I not what delight was else on earth,
Which now delights me little. I the rather
Look on such pangs as terror ill conceals, 110
The dry fixed eyeball; the pale quivering lip,
Which tell me that the spirit weeps within
Tears bitterer than the bloody sweat of Christ.
I rarely kill the body, which preserves,
Like a strong prison, the soul within my power, 115
Wherein I feed it with the breath of fear
For hourly pain.

CAMILLO.

Hell's most abandoned fiend

Did never, in the drunkenness of guilt,

Speak to his heart as now you speak to me ;
I thank my God that I believe you not. 120

Enter ANDREA.

ANDREA.

My Lord, a gentleman from Salamanca
Would speak with you.

CENCI.

Bid him attend me in the grand saloon. (*Exit ANDREA.*)

CAMILLO.

Farewell; and I will pray
Almighty God that thy false, impious words 125
Tempt not his spirit to abandon thee. (*Exit CAMILLO.*)

CENCI.

The third of my possessions! I must use
Close husbandry, or gold, the old man's sword,
Falls from my withered hand. But yesterday
There came an order from the Pope to make 130
Fourfold provision for my cursèd sons;
Whom I had sent from Rome to Salamanca,
Hoping some accident might cut them off;
And meaning if I could to starve them there.
I pray thee, God, send some quick death upon them! 135
Bernardo and my wife could not be worse
If dead and damned:—then, as to Beatrice—

(looking around him suspiciously)

I think they cannot hear me at that door;
What if they should? And yet I need not speak
Though the heart triumphs with itself in words. 140
O, thou most silent air, that shalt not hear
What now I think! Thou, pavement, which I tread
Towards her chamber,—let your echoes talk
Of my imperious step scorning surprise,
But not of my intent!—Andrea!

Enter ANDREA.

ANDREA.

My lord? 145

CENCI.

Bid Beatrice attend me in her chamber
This evening:—no, at midnight and alone. (*Exeunt.*)

SCENE II.

A GARDEN OF THE CENCI PALACE. ENTER BEATRICE AND ORSINO,
AS IN CONVERSATION.

BEATRICE.

Pervert not truth,

Orsino. You remember where we held
That conversation;—nay, we see the spot
Even from this cypress;—two long years are past
Since, on an April midnight, underneath
The moonlight ruins of mount Palatine,
I did confess to you my secret mind.

5

ORSINO.

You said you loved me then.

BEATRICE.

You are a Priest,

Speak to me not of love.

ORSINO.

I may obtain

The dispensation of the Pope to marry.
Because I am a Priest do you believe
Your image, as the hunter some struck deer,
Follows me not whether I wake or sleep?

10

BEATRICE.

As I have said, speak to me not of love;
Had you a dispensation I have not;
Nor will I leave this home of misery
Whilst my poor Bernard, and that gentle lady
To whom I owe life, and these virtuous thoughts,
Must suffer what I still have strength to share.
Alas, Orsino! All the love that once
I felt for you, is turned to bitter pain.
Our's was a youthful contract, which you first
Broke, by assuming vows no Pope will loose.
And thus I love you still, but holily,
Even as a sister or a spirit might;
And so I swear a cold fidelity.
And it is well perhaps we shall not marry.

15

20

25

You have a sly, equivocating vein
That suits me not.—Ah, wretched that I am!
Where shall I turn? Even now you look on me 30
As you were not my friend, and as if you
Discovered that I thought so, with false smiles
Making my true suspicion seem your wrong.
Ah! No, forgive me; sorrow makes me seem
Stern than else my nature might have been; 35
I have a weight of melancholy thoughts,
And they forbode,—but what can they forbode
Worse than I now endure?

ORSINO.

All will be well.
Is the petition yet prepared? You know
My zeal for all you wish, sweet Beatrice; 40
Doubt not but I will use my utmost skill
So that the Pope attend to your complaint.

BEATRICE.

Your zeal for all I wish;—Ah me, you are cold!
Your utmost skill . . . speak but one word . . . (*aside*) Alas!
Weak and deserted creature that I am, 45
Here I stand bickering with my only friend! (*To ORSINO*)
This night my father gives a sumptuous feast,
Orsino; he has heard some happy news
From Salamanca, from my brothers there,
And with this outward shew of love he mocks 50
His inward hate. 'Tis bold hypocrisy,
For he would gladlier celebrate their deaths,
Which I have heard him pray for on his knees:
Great God! that such a father should be mine!
But there is mighty preparation made, 55
And all our kin, the Cenci, will be there,
And all the chief nobility of Rome.
And he has bidden me and my pale Mother
Attire ourselves in festival array.
Poor lady! She expects some happy change 60
In his dark spirit from this act; I none.
At supper I will give you the petition:
Till when—farewell.

ORSINO.

Farewell. (*Exit BEATRICE.*) I know the Pope
Will ne'er absolve me from my priestly vow
But by absolving me from the revenue 65
Of many a wealthy see; and, Beatrice,
I think to win thee at an easier rate.
Nor shall he read her eloquent petition:
He might bestow her on some poor relation
Of his sixth cousin, as he did her sister, 70
And I should be debarred from all access.
Then as to what she suffers from her father,
In all this there is much exaggeration:—
Old men are testy and will have their way;
A man may stab his enemy, or his vassal, 75
And live a free life as to wine or women,
And with a peevish temper may return
To a dull home, and rate his wife and children;
Daughters and wives call this foul tyranny.
I shall be well content if on my conscience 80
There rest no heavier sin than what they suffer
From the devices of my love—A net
From which she shall escape not. Yet I fear
Her subtle mind, her awe-inspiring gaze,
Whose beams anatomize me nerve by nerve 85
And lay me bare, and make me blush to see
My hidden thoughts.—Ah, no! A friendless girl
Who clings to me, as to her only hope:—
I were a fool, not less than if a panther
Were panic-stricken by the antelope's eye, 90
If she escape me. (*Exit.*)

SCENE III.

A MAGNIFICENT HALL IN THE CENCI PALACE. A BANQUET. ENTER CENCI, LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, ORSINO, CAMILLO, NOBLES.

CENCI.

Welcome, my friends and kinsmen; welcome ye,
Princes and Cardinals, pillars of the church,
Whose presence honours our festivity.

I have too long lived like an anchorite,
 And in my absence from your merry meetings 5
 An evil word is gone abroad of me;
 But I do hope that you, my noble friends,
 When you have shared the entertainment here,
 And heard the pious cause for which 'tis given,
 And we have pledged a health or two together, 10
 Will think me flesh and blood as well as you;
 Sinful indeed, for Adam made all so,
 But tender-hearted, meek and pitiful.

FIRST GUEST.

In truth, my Lord, you seem too light of heart,
 Too sprightly and companionable a man, 15
 To act the deeds that rumour pins on you.
 (*To his companion*) I never saw such blithe and open cheer
 In any eye!

SECOND GUEST.

Some most desired event,
 In which we all demand a common joy,
 Has brought us hither; let us hear it, Count. 20

CENCI.

It is indeed a most desired event.
 If when a parent from a parent's heart
 Lifts from this earth to the great father of all
 A prayer, both when he lays him down to sleep,
 And when he rises up from dreaming it; 25
 One supplication, one desire, one hope,
 That he would grant a wish for his two sons,
 Even all that he demands in their regard—
 And suddenly beyond his dearest hope,
 It is accomplished, he should then rejoice, 30
 And call his friends and kinsmen to a feast,
 And task their love to grace his merriment,
 Then honour me thus far—for I am he.

BEATRICE (*to Lucretia*).

Great God! How horrible! Some dreadful ill
 Must have befallen my brothers.

LUCRETIA.

Fear not, Child, 35

He speaks too frankly.

BEATRICE.

Ah! My blood runs cold.
I fear that wicked laughter round his eye,
Which wrinkles up the skin even to the hair.

CENCI.

Here are the letters brought from Salamanca;
Beatrice, read them to your mother. God! 40
I thank thee! In one night didst thou perform,
By ways inscrutable, the thing I sought.
My disobedient and rebellious sons
Are dead!—Why dead!—What means this change of cheer?
You hear me not, I tell you they are dead; 45
And they will need no food or raiment more:
The tapers that did light them the dark way
Are their last cost. The Pope, I think, will not
Expect I should maintain them in their coffins.
Rejoice with me—my heart is wondrous glad. 50

BEATRICE.

(Lucretia sinks, half fainting; Beatrice supports her.)
It is not true!—Dear lady, pray look up.
Had it been true, there is a God in Heaven,
He would not live to boast of such a boon.
Unnatural man, thou knowest that it is false.

CENCI.

Aye, as the word of God; whom here I call 55
To witness that I speak the sober truth;—
And whose most favouring Providence was shewn
Even in the manner of their deaths. For Rocco
Was kneeling at the mass, with sixteen others,
When the church fell and crushed him to a mumny, 60
The rest escaped unhurt. Cristofano
Was stabbed in error by a jealous man,
Whilst she he loved was sleeping with his rival;
All in the self-same hour of the same night;
Which shews that Heaven has special care of me. 65
I beg those friends who love me, that they mark
The day a feast upon their calendars.
It was the twenty-seventh of December:
Aye, read the letters if you doubt my oath.
(The assembly appears confused; several of the guests rise.)

FIRST GUEST.

Oh, horrible! I will depart.—

SECOND GUEST.

And I.—

THIRD GUEST.

No, stay!

70

I do believe it is some jest; tho' faith!

'Tis mocking us somewhat too solemnly.

I think his son has married the Infanta,

Or found a mine of gold in El dorado;

'Tis but to season some such news; stay, stay!

75

I see 'tis only raillery by his smile.

CENCI.

(filling a bowl of wine, and lifting it up)

Oh, thou bright wine whose purple splendour leaps

And bubbles gaily in this golden bowl

Under the lamp-light, as my spirits do,

To hear the death of my accursèd sons!

80

Could I believe thou wert their mingled blood,

Then would I taste thee like a sacrament,

And pledge with thee the mighty Devil in Hell,

Who, if a father's curses, as men say,

Climb with swift wings after their children's souls,

85

And drag them from the very throne of Heaven,

Now triumphs in my triumph!—But thou art

Superfluous; I have drunken deep of joy,

And I will taste no other wine to-night.

Here, Andrea! Bear the bowl around.

A GUEST *(rising)*.

Thou wretch! 90

Will none among this noble company

Check the abandoned villain?

CAMILLO.

For God's sake

Let me dismiss the guests! You are insane,

Some ill will come of this.

SECOND GUEST.

Seize, silence him!

91

FIRST GUEST.

I will!

THIRD GUEST.

And I!

CENCI. (*Addressing those who rise with a threatening gesture*)

Who moves? Who speaks?

(*Turning to the Company*) 'tis nothing,Enjoy yourselves.—Beware! For my revenge 96

Is as the sealed commission of a king

That kills, and none dare name the murderer.

(*The Banquet is broken up; several of the Guests are departing.*)

BEATRICE.

I do entreat you, go not, noble guests;

What, although tyranny and impious hate 100

Stand sheltered by a father's hoary hair?

What, if 'tis he who clothed us in these limbs

Who tortures them, and triumphs? What, if we,

The desolate and the dead, were his own flesh,

His children and his wife, whom he is bound 105

To love and shelter? Shall we therefore find

No refuge in this merciless wide world?

Oh, think what deep wrongs must have blotted out

First love, then reverence in a child's prone mind,

Till it thus vanquish shame and fear! O, think! 110

I have borne much, and kissed the sacred hand

Which crushed us to the earth, and thought its stroke

Was perhaps some paternal chastisement!

Have excused much, doubted; and when no doubt

Remained, have sought by patience, love and tears 115

To soften him, and when this could not be

I have knelt down through the long sleepless nights

And lifted up to God, the father of all,

Passionate prayers: and when these were not heard

I have still borne,—until I meet you here, 120

Princes and kinsmen, at this hideous feast

Given at my brothers' deaths. Two yet remain,

His wife remains and I, whom if ye save not,

Ye may soon share such merriment again

As fathers make over their children's graves. 125

Oh! Prince Colonna, thou art our near kinsman,

Cardinal, thou art the Pope's chamberlain,

Camillo, thou art chief justiciary,

Take us away!

CENCI.

(He has been conversing with Camillo during the first part of Beatrice's speech; he hears the conclusion, and now advances.)

I hope my good friends here
Will think of their own daughters—or perhaps 130
Of their own throats—before they lend an ear
To this wild girl.

BEATRICE. *(Not noticing the words of Cenci.)*

Dare no one look on me?
None answer? Can one tyrant overbear
The sense of many best and wisest men?
Or is it that I sue not in some form 135
Of scrupulous law, that ye deny my suit?
Oh, God! That I were buried with my brothers!
And that the flowers of this departed spring
Were fading on my grave! And that my father
Were celebrating now one feast for all! 140

CAMILLO.

A bitter wish for one so young and gentle;
Can we do nothing?

COLONNA.

Nothing that I see.
Count Cenci were a dangerous enemy:
Yet I would second any one.

A CARDINAL.

And I.

CENCI.

Retire to your chamber, insolent girl! 145

BEATRICE.

Retire thou impious man! Aye hide thyself
Where never eye can look upon thee more!
Wouldst thou have honour and obedience
Who art a torturer? Father, never dream
Though thou mayst overbear this company, 150
But ill must come of ill.—Frown not on me!
Haste, hide thyself, lest with avenging looks
My brothers' ghosts should hunt thee from thy seat!
Cover thy face from every living eye,
And start if thou but hear a human step: 155

Seek out some dark and silent corner, there,
Bow thy white head before offended God,
And we will kneel around, and fervently
Pray that he pity both ourselves and thee.

CENCI.

My friends, I do lament this insane girl 160
Has spoilt the mirth of our festivity.

Good night, farewell; I will not make you longer
Spectators of our dull domestic quarrels.

Another time.—(*Exeunt all but CENCI and BEATRICE.*)

My brain is swimming round;
Give me a bowl of wine! (*To Beatrice*) Thou painted viper!
Beast that thou art! Fair and yet terrible! 166

I know a charm shall make thee meek and tame,
Now get thee from my sight! (*Exit BEATRICE.*)

Here, Andrea,
Fill up this goblet with Greek wine. I said
I would not drink this evening; but I must; 170
For, strange to say, I feel my spirits fail
With thinking what I have decreed to do.—

(*Drinking the wine*)

Be thou the resolution of quick youth
Within my veins, and manhood's purpose stern,
And age's firm, cold, subtle villainy; 175
As if thou wert indeed my children's blood
Which I did thirst to drink! The charm works well;
It must be done; it shall be done, I swear! (*Exit.*)

ACT II.

SCENE I.

AN APARTMENT IN THE CENCI PALACE. ENTER LUCRETIA AND BERNARDO.

LUCRETIA.

Weep not, my gentle boy; he struck but me
Who have borne deeper wrongs. In truth, if he
Had killed me, he had done a kinder deed.
O, God Almighty, do thou look upon us,
We have no other friend but only thee! 5
Yet weep not; though I love you as my own,
I am not your true mother.

BERNARDO.

Oh more, more,
Than ever mother was to any child,
That have you been to me! Had he not been
My father, do you think that I should weep? 10

LUCRETIA.

Alas! Poor boy, what else couldst thou have done?

Enter BEATRICE.

BEATRICE (*In a hurried voice*).

Did he pass this way? Have you seen him, brother?
Ah! No, that is his step upon the stairs;
'Tis nearer now; his hand is on the door;
Mother, if I to thee have ever been 15
A duteous child, now save me! Thou, great God,
Whose image upon earth a father is,
Dost thou indeed abandon me? He comes;
The door is opening now; I see his face;
He frowns on others, but he smiles on me, 20
Even as he did after the feast last night.

Enter a Servant.

Almighty God, how merciful thou art!
'Tis but Orsino's servant.—Well, what news?

SERVANT.

My master bids me say, the Holy Father
Has sent back your petition thus unopened. (*Giving a paper*)
And he demands at what hour 'twere secure 26
To visit you again?

LUCRETIA.

At the Ave Mary. (*Exit Servant.*)

So, daughter, our last hope has failed; Ah me!
How pale you look; you tremble, and you stand
Wrapped in some fixed and fearful meditation, 30
As if one thought were over strong for you:
Your eyes have a chill glare; O, dearest child!
Are you gone mad? If not, pray speak to me.

BEATRICE.

You see I am not mad; I speak to you.

LUCRETIA.

You talked of something that your father did 35
After that dreadful feast? Could it be worse
Than when he smiled, and cried, My sons are dead!
And every one looked in his neighbour's face
To see if others were as white as he?
At the first word he spoke I felt the blood 40
Rush to my heart, and fell into a trance;
And when it past I sat all weak and wild;
Whilst you alone stood up, and with strong words
Checked his unnatural pride; and I could see
The devil was rebuked that lives in him. 45
Until this hour thus have you ever stood
Between us and your father's moody wrath
Like a protecting presence: your firm mind
Has been our only refuge and defence:
What can have thus subdued it? What can now 50
Have given you that cold melancholy look,
Succeeding to your unaccustomed fear?

BEATRICE.

What is it that you say? I was just thinking
'Twere better not to struggle any more.
Men, like my father, have been dark and bloody, 55
Yet never—O! Before worse comes of it
'Twere wise to die: it ends in that at last.

LUCRETIA.

Oh, talk not so, dear child! Tell me at once
What did your father do or say to you?
He stayed not after that accursèd feast
One moment in your chamber.—Speak to me.

60

BERNARDO.

Oh, sister, sister, prithee, speak to us!

BEATRICE.

(Speaking very slowly with a forced calmness)

It was one word, Mother, one little word;
One look, one smile. *(wildly)* Oh! He has trampled me
Under his feet, and made the blood stream down
My pallid cheeks. And he has given us all
Ditch water, and the fever-stricken flesh
Of buffaloes, and bade us eat or starve,
And we have eaten.—He has made me look
On my beloved Bernardo, when the rust
Of heavy chains has gangrened his sweet limbs,
And I have never yet despaired—but now!
What could I say? *(recovering herself.)*

65

70

Ah! No, 'tis nothing new
The sufferings we all share have made me wild:
He only struck and cursed me as he passed;
He said, he looked, he did;—nothing at all
Beyond his wont, yet it disordered me.
Alas! I am forgetful of my duty,
I should preserve my senses for your sake.

75

LUCRETIA.

Nay, Beatrice; have courage my sweet girl,
If any one despairs it should be I
Who loved him once, and now must live with him
Till God in pity call for him or me.
For you may, like your sister, find some husband,
And smile, years hence, with children round your knees;
Whilst I, then dead, and all this hideous coil
Shall be remembered only as a dream.

80

BEATRICE.

Talk not to me, dear lady, of a husband.
Did you not nurse me when my mother died?
Did you not shield me and that dearest boy?

90

And had we any other friend but you
In infancy, with gentle words and looks,
To win our father not to murder us?
And shall I now desert you? May the ghost
Of my dead Mother plead against my soul 95
If I abandon her who filled the place
She left, with more, even, than a mother's love!

BERNARDO.

And I am of my sister's mind. Indeed
I would not leave you in this wretchedness,
Even though the Pope should make me free to live 100
In some blithe place, like others of my age,
With sports, and delicate food, and the fresh air.
Oh, never think that I will leave you, Mother!

LUCRETIA.

My dear, dear children!

Enter CENCI, suddenly.

CENCI.

What, Beatrice here!
Come hither! (*she shrinks back, and covers her face*)
Nay, hide not your face, 'tis fair; 105
Look up! Why, yesternight you dared to look
With disobedient insolence upon me,
Bending a stern and an inquiring brow
On what I meant; whilst I then sought to hide
That which I came to tell you—but in vain. 110

BEATRICE. (*Wildly, staggering towards the door.*)
Oh, that the earth would gape! Hide me, oh God!

CENCI.

Then it was I whose inarticulate words
Fell from my lips, and who with tottering steps
Fled from your presence, as you now from mine.
Stay, I command you—from this day and hour 115
Never again, I think, with fearless eye,
And brow superior, and unaltered cheek,
And that lip made for tenderness or scorn,
Shalt thou strike dumb the meanest of mankind;
Me least of all. Now get thee to thy chamber! 120
Thou too, loathed image of thy cursèd mother,

(to BERNARDO)

Thy milky, meek face makes me sick with hate!

*(Exeunt BEATRICE and BERNARDO.)**(Aside.)* So much has past between us as must make
Me bold, her fearful.—'Tis an awful thing

To touch such mischief as I now conceive: 125

So men sit shivering on the dewy bank,
And try the chill stream with their feet; once in ...
How the delighted spirit pants for joy!LUCRETIA. *(Advancing timidly towards him)*Oh, husband! Pray forgive poor Beatrice,
She meant not any ill.

CENCI.

Nor you perhaps? 130

Nor that young imp, whom you have taught by rote
Parricide with his alphabet? Nor Giacomo?Nor those two most unnatural sons, who stirred
Enmity up against me with the Pope?Whom in one night merciful God cut off: 135
Innocent lambs! They thought not any ill.You were not here conspiring? You said nothing
Of how I might be dungeoned as a madman;
Or be condemned to death for some offence,
And you would be the witnesses?—This failing, 140How just it were to hire assassins, or
Put sudden poison in my evening drink?Or smother me when overcome by wine?
Seeing we had no other judge but God,
And he had sentenced me, and there were none 145But you to be the executioners
Of his decree enregistered in heaven?
Oh, no! You said not this?

LUCRETIA.

So help me God,

I never thought the things you charge me with!

CENCI.

If you dare speak that wicked lie again 150
I'll kill you. What! It was not by your counsel
That Beatrice disturbed the feast last night?
You did not hope to stir some enemies

Against me, and escape, and laugh to scorn
What every nerve of you now trembles at? 155
You judged that men were bolder than they are;
Few dare to stand between their grave and me.

LUCRETIA.

Look not so dreadfully! By my salvation
I knew not aught that Beatrice designed;
Nor do I think she designed any thing 160
Until she heard you talk of her dead brothers.

CENCI.

Blaspheming liar! You are damned for this!
But I will take you where you may persuade
The stones you tread on to deliver you:
For men shall there be none but those who dare 165
All things—not question that which I command.
On Wednesday next I shall set out: you know
That savage rock, the Castle of Petrella:
'Tis safely walled, and moated round about:
Its dungeons underground, and its thick towers 170
Never told tales; though they have heard and seen
What might make dumb things speak.—Why do you linger?
Make speediest preparation for the journey!

(Exit LUCRETIA.)

The all-beholding sun yet shines; I hear
A busy stir of men about the streets; 175
I see the bright sky through the window panes:
It is a garish, broad, and peering day;
Loud, light, suspicious, full of eyes and ears,
And every little corner, nook and hole
Is penetrated with the insolent light. 180
Come darkness! Yet, what is the day to me?
And wherefore should I wish for night, who do
A deed which shall confound both night and day?
'Tis she shall grope through a bewildering mist
Of horror: if there be a sun in heaven 185
She shall not dare to look upon its beams;
Nor feel its warmth. Let her then wish for night;
The act I think shall soon extinguish all
For me: I bear a darker deadlier gloom
Than the earth's shade, or interlunar air, 190

Or constellations quenched in murkiest cloud,
In which I walk secure and unbeheld
Towards my purpose.—Would that it were done! (*Exiit.*)

SCENE II.

A CHAMBER IN THE VATICAN. ENTER CAMILLO AND GIACOMO,
IN CONVERSATION.

CAMILLO.

There is an obsolete and doubtful law
By which you might obtain a bare provision
Of food and clothing—

GIACOMO.

Nothing more? Alas!

Bare must be the provision which strict law
Awards, and aged, sullen avarice pays. 5
Why did my father not apprentice me
To some mechanic trade? I should have then
Been trained in no highborn necessities
Which I could meet not by my daily toil.
The eldest son of a rich nobleman 10
Is heir to all his incapacities;
He has wide wants, and narrow powers. If you,
Cardinal Camillo, were reduced at once
From thrice-driven beds of down, and delicate food,
An hundred servants, and six palaces, 15
To that which nature doth indeed require?—

CAMILLO.

Nay, there is reason in your plea; 'twere hard.

GIACOMO.

'Tis hard for a firm man to bear: but I
Have a dear wife, a lady of high birth,
Whose dowry in ill hour I lent my father 20
Without a bond or witness to the deed:
And children, who inherit her fine senses,
The fairest creatures in this breathing world;
And she and they reproach me not. Cardinal,

Do you not think the Pope would interpose
And stretch authority beyond the law? 25

CAMILLO.

Though your peculiar case is hard, I know
The Pope will not divert the course of law.
After that impious feast the other night
I spoke with him, and urged him then to check 30
Your father's cruel hand; he frowned and said,
"Children are disobedient, and they sting
"Their fathers' hearts to madness and despair,
"Requiting years of care with contumely.
"I pity the Count Cenci from my heart; 35
"His outraged love perhaps awakened hate,
"And thus he is exasperated to ill.
"In the great war between the old and young
"I, who have white hairs and a tottering body,
"Will keep at least blameless neutrality." 40

Enter ORSINO.

You, my good Lord Orsino, heard those words.

ORSINO.

What words?

GIACOMO.

Alas, repeat them not again!
There then is no redress for me, at least
None but that which I may achieve myself,
Since I am driven to the brink.—But, say, 45
My innocent sister and my only brother
Are dying underneath my father's eye.
The memorable torturers of this land,
Galeaz Visconti, Borgia, Ezzelin,
Never inflicted on the meanest slave 50
What these endure; shall they have no protection?

CAMILLO.

Why, if they would petition to the Pope
I see not how he could refuse it—yet
He holds it of most dangerous example
In aught to weaken the paternal power, 55
Being, as 'twere, the shadow of his own.
I pray you now excuse me. I have business
That will not bear delay. (*Exit CAMILLO.*)

GIACOMO.

But you, Orsino,
Have the petition: wherefore not present it?

ORSINO.

I have presented it, and backed it with 60
My earnest prayers, and urgent interest;
It was returned unanswered. I doubt not
But that the strange and execrable deeds
Alleged in it—in truth they might well baffle
Any belief—have turned the Pope's displeasure 65
Upon the accusers from the criminal:
So I should guess from what Camillo said.

GIACOMO.

My friend, that palace-walking devil Gold
Has whispered silence to his Holiness:
And we are left, as scorpions ringed with fire. 70
What should we do but strike ourselves to death?
For he who is our murderous persecutor
Is shielded by a father's holy name,
Or I would— *(stops abruptly)*

ORSINO.

What? Fear not to speak your thought.
Words are but holy as the deeds they cover: 75
A priest who has forsworn the God he serves;
A judge who makes Truth weep at his decree;
A friend who should weave counsel, as I now,
But as the mantle of some selfish guile;
A father who is all a tyrant seems, 80
Were the profaner for his sacred name.

GIACOMO.

Ask me not what I think; the unwilling brain
Feigns often what it would not; and we trust
Imagination with such phantasies
As the tongue dares not fashion into words, 85
Which have no words, their horror makes them dim
To the mind's eye.—My heart denies itself
To think what you demand.

ORSINO.

But a friend's bosom
Is as the inmost cave of our own mind

Where we sit shut from the wide gaze of day, 90
And from the all-communicating air.
You look what I suspected—

GIACOMO.

Spare me now!

I am as one lost in a midnight wood,
Who dares not ask some harmless passenger
The path across the wilderness, lest he, 95
As my thoughts are, should be—a murderer.
I know you are my friend, and all I dare
Speak to my soul that will I trust with thee.
But now my heart is heavy, and would take
Lone counsel from a night of sleepless care. 100
Pardon me, that I say farewell—farewell!
I would that to my own suspected self
I could address a word so full of peace

ORSINO.

Farewell!—Be your thoughts better or more bold.

(*Exit* GIACOMO.)

I had disposed the Cardinal Camillo 105
To feed his hope with cold encouragement:
It fortunately serves my close designs
That 'tis a trick of this same family
To analyse their own and other minds.
Such self-anatomy shall teach the will 110
Dangerous secrets: for it tempts our powers,
Knowing what must be thought, and may be done,
Into the depth of darkest purposes:
So Cenci fell into the pit; even I,
Since Beatrice unveiled me to myself, 115
And made me shrink from what I cannot shun,
Shew a poor figure to my own esteem,
To which I grow half reconciled. I'll do
As little mischief as I can; that thought
Shall fee the accuser conscience.

(*After a pause*)

Now what harm 120
If Cenci should be murdered?—Yet, if murdered,
Wherefore by me? And what if I could take
The profit, yet omit the sin and peril
In such an action? Of all earthly things

I fear a man whose blows outspeed his words; 125
And such is Cenci: and while Cenci lives
His daughter's dowry were a secret grave
If a priest wins her.—Oh, fair Beatrice!
Would that I loved thee not, or loving thee
Could but despise danger and gold and all 130
That frowns between my wish and its effect,
Or smiles beyond it! There is no escape...
Her bright form kneels beside me at the altar,
And follows me to the resort of men,
And fills my slumber with tumultuous dreams, 135
So when I wake my blood seems liquid fire;
And if I strike my damp and dizzy head
My hot palm scorches it: her very name,
But spoken by a stranger, makes my heart
Sicken and pant; and thus unprofitably 140
I clasp the phantom of unfelt delights
Till weak imagination half possesses
The self-created shadow. Yet much longer
Will I not nurse this life of feverous hours:
From the unravelled hopes of Giacomo 145
I must work out my own dear purposes.
I see, as from a tower, the end of all:
Her father dead; her brother bound to me
By a dark secret, surer than the grave;
Her mother scared and unexpostulating 150
From the dread manner of her wish achieved:
And she!—Once more take courage my faint heart;
What dares a friendless maiden matched with thee?
I have such foresight as assures success:
Some unbeheld divinity doth ever, 155
When dread events are near, stir up men's minds
To black suggestions; and he prospers best,
Not who becomes the instrument of ill,
But who can flatter the dark spirit, that makes
Its empire and its prey of other hearts 160
Till it become his slave... as I will do. (*Exit.*)

ACT III.

SCENE I.

AN APARTMENT IN THE CENCI PALACE. LUCRETIA, TO HER ENTER
BEATRICE.

BEATRICE.

(She enters staggering, and speaks wildly.)

Reach me that handkerchief!—My brain is hurt;
My eyes are full of blood; just wipe them for me...
I see but indistinctly...

LUCRETIA.

My sweet child,
You have no wound; 'tis only a cold dew
That starts from your dear brow... Alas! Alas! 5
What has befallen?

BEATRICE.

How comes this hair undone?
Its wandering strings must be what blind me so,
And yet I tied it fast.—O, horrible!
The pavement sinks under my feet! The walls
Spin round! I see a woman weeping there, 10
And standing calm and motionless, whilst I
Slide giddily as the world reels... My God!
The beautiful blue heaven is flecked with blood!
The sunshine on the floor is black! The air
Is changed to vapours such as the dead breathe 15
In charnel pits! Pah! I am choked! There creeps
A clinging, black, contaminating mist
About me... 'tis substantial, heavy, thick,
I cannot pluck it from me, for it glues
My fingers and my limbs to one another, 20
And eats into my sinews, and dissolves
My flesh to a pollution, poisoning
The subtle, pure, and inmost spirit of life!
My God! I never knew what the mad felt
Before; for I am mad beyond all doubt! 25

(*more wildly*) No, I am dead! These putrefying limbs
Shut round and sepulchre the panting soul
Which would burst forth into the wandering air! (*a pause*)
What hideous thought was that I had even now?
'Tis gone; and yet its burthen remains here 30
O'er these dull eyes... upon this weary heart!
O, world! O, life! O, day! O, misery!

LUCRETIA.

What ails thee, my poor child? She answers not:
Her spirit apprehends the sense of pain,
But not its cause; suffering has dried away 35
The source from which it sprung...

BEATRICE (*frantically*).

Like Parricide...

Misery has killed its father: yet its father
Never like mine... O, God! What thing am I?

LUCRETIA.

My dearest child, what has your father done?

BEATRICE (*doubtfully*).

Who art thou, questioner? I have no father. 40
(*aside*) She is the madhouse nurse who tends on me,
It is a piteous office.

(*To Lucretia, in a slow, subdued voice*) Do you know
I thought I was that wretched Beatrice
Men speak of, whom her father sometimes hales
From hall to hall by the entangled hair; 45
At others, pens up naked in damp cells
Where scaly reptiles crawl, and starves her there,
Till she will eat strange flesh. This woful story
So did I overact in my sick dreams,
That I imagined... no, it cannot be! 50
Horrible things have been in this wild world,
Prodigious mixtures, and confusions strange
Of good and ill; and worse have been conceived
Than ever there was found a heart to do.
But never fancy imaged such a deed 55

As... (*pauses, suddenly recollecting herself*)

Who art thou? Swear to me, ere I die
With fearful expectation, that indeed
Thou art not what thou seemest... Mother!

LUCRETIA.

Oh!

My sweet child, know you. . .

BEATRICE.

Yet speak it not:

For then if this be truth, that other too 60

Must be a truth, a firm enduring truth,
Linked with each lasting circumstance of life,
Never to change, never to pass away.

Why so it is. This is the Cenci Palace;

Thou art Lucretia; I am Beatrice. 65

I have talked some wild words, but will no more.

Mother, come near me: from this point of time,

I am. . . (*her voice dies away faintly*)

LUCRETIA.

Alas! What has befallen thee, child?

What has thy father done?

BEATRICE.

What have I done?

Am I not innocent? Is it my crime 70

That one with white hair, and imperious brow,

Who tortured me from my forgotten years,

As parents only dare, should call himself

My father, yet should be!—Oh, what am I?

What name, what place, what memory shall be mine? 75

What retrospects, outliving even despair?

LUCRETIA.

He is a violent tyrant, surely, child:

We know that death alone can make us free;

His death or ours. But what can he have done

Of deadlier outrage or worse injury? 80

Thou art unlike thyself; thine eyes shoot forth

A wandering and strange spirit. Speak to me,

Unlock those pallid hands whose fingers twine

With one another.

BEATRICE.

'Tis the restless life

Tortured within them. If I try to speak 85

I shall go mad. Aye, something must be done;

What, yet I know not. . . something which shall make

The thing that I have suffered but a shadow
In the dread lightning which avenges it;
Brief, rapid, irreversible, destroying 90
The consequence of what it cannot cure.
Some such thing is to be endured or done:
When I know what, I shall be still and calm,
And never any thing will move me more.
But now!—Oh blood, which art my father's blood, 95
Circling thro' these contaminated veins,
If thou, poured forth on the polluted earth,
Could wash away the crime, and punishment
By which I suffer . . . no, that cannot be!
Many might doubt there were a God above 100
Who sees and permits evil, and so die:
That faith no agony shall obscure in me.

LUCRETIA.

It must indeed have been some bitter wrong;
Yet what, I dare not guess. Oh, my lost child,
Hide not in proud impenetrable grief 105
Thy sufferings from my fear.

BEATRICE.

I hide them not.

What are the words which you would have me speak?
I, who can feign no image in my mind
Of that which has transformed me: I, whose thought
Is like a ghost shrouded and folded up 110
In its own formless horror: of all words,
That minister to mortal intercourse,
Which wouldst thou hear? For there is none to tell
My misery: if another ever knew
Aught like to it, she died as I will die, 115
And left it, as I must, without a name.
Death! Death! Our law and our religion call thee
A punishment and a reward . . . Oh, which
Have I deserved?

LUCRETIA.

The peace of innocence;
Till in your season you be called to heaven. 120
Whate'er you may have suffered, you have done
No evil. Death must be the punishment

Of crime, or the reward of trampling down
The thorns which God has strewed upon the path
Which leads to immortality.

BEATRICE.

Aye, death. . . 125
The punishment of crime. I pray thee, God,
Let me not be bewildered while I judge.
If I must live day after day, and keep
These limbs, the unworthy temple of thy spirit,
As a foul den from which what thou abhorrest 130
May mock thee, unavenged. . . it shall not be!
Self-murder. . . no, that might be no escape,
For thy decree yawns like a Hell between
Our will and it:—O! In this mortal world
There is no vindication and no law 135
Which can adjudge and execute the doom
Of that through which I suffer.

Enter ORSINO.

(*She approaches him solemnly.*) Welcome, Friend!
I have to tell you that, since last we met,
I have endured a wrong so great and strange,
That neither life nor death can give me rest. 140
Ask me not what it is, for there are deeds
Which have no form, sufferings which have no tongue.

ORSINO.

And what is he who has thus injured you?

BEATRICE.

The man they call my father: a dread name.

ORSINO.

It cannot be. . .

BEATRICE.

What it can be, or not, 145
Forbear to think. It is, and it has been;
Advise me how it shall not be again.
I thought to die; but a religious awe
Restrains me, and the dread lest death itself
Might be no refuge from the consciousness 150
Of what is yet unexpiated. Oh, speak!

ORSINO.

Accuse him of the deed, and let the law
Avenge thee.

BEATRICE.

Oh, ice-hearted counsellor!
If I could find a word that might make known
The crime of my destroyer; and that done, 155
My tongue should like a knife tear out the secret
Which cankers my heart's core; aye, lay all bare
So that my unpolluted fame should be
With vilest gossips a stale mouthèd story;
A mock, a bye-word, an astonishment:— 160
If this were done, which never shall be done,
Think of the offender's gold, his dreaded hate,
And the strange horror of the accuser's tale,
Baffling belief, and overpowering speech;
Scarce whispered, unimaginable, wrapt 165
In hideous hints. . . Oh, most assured redress!

ORSINO.

You will endure it then?

BEATRICE.

Endure?—Orsino,
It seems your counsel is small profit.
(*Turns from him, and speaks half to herself*) Aye,
All must be suddenly resolved and done.
What is this undistinguishable mist 170
Of thoughts, which rise, like shadow after shadow,
Darkening each other?

ORSINO.

Should the offender live?
Triumph in his misdeed? and make, by use,
His crime, whate'er it is, dreadful no doubt,
Thine element; until thou mayest become 175
Utterly lost; subdued even to the hue
Of that which thou permittest?

BEATRICE (*To herself*).

Mighty death!
Thou double-visaged shadow! Only judge!
Rightfullest arbiter! (*She retires absorbed in thought.*)

LUCRETIA.

If the lightning
Of God has e'er descended to avenge. . . 180

ORSINO.

Blaspheme not! His high Providence commits
Its glory on this earth, and their own wrongs
Into the hands of men; if they neglect
To punish crime. . .

LUCRETIA.

But if one, like this wretch,
Should mock with gold, opinion law and power? 185
If there be no appeal to that which makes
The guiltiest tremble? If because our wrongs,
For that they are unnatural, strange and monstrous,
Exceed all measure of belief? Oh, God!
If, for the very reasons which should make 190
Redress most swift and sure, our injurer triumphs?
And we, the victims, bear worse punishment
Than that appointed for their torturer?

ORSINO.

Think not
But that there is redress where there is wrong,
So we be bold enough to seize it.

LUCRETIA.

How? 195
If there were any way to make all sure,
I know not. . . but I think it might be good
To. . .

ORSINO.

Why, his late outrage to Beatrice;
For it is such, as I but faintly guess,
As makes remorse dishonour, and leaves her 200
Only one duty, how she may avenge:
You, but one refuge from ills ill endured;
Me, but one counsel. . .

LUCRETIA.

For we cannot hope
That aid, or retribution, or resource
Will arise thence, where every other one 205
Might find them with less need. (*BEATRICE advances.*)

ORSINO.

Then . . .

BEATRICE.

Peace, Orsino!

And, honoured Lady, while I speak, I pray,
 That you put off, as garments overworn,
 Forbearance and respect, remorse and fear,
 And all the fit restraints of daily life, 210
 Which have been borne from childhood, but which now
 Would be a mockery to my holier plea.
 As I have said, I have endured a wrong,
 Which, though it be expressionless, is such
 As asks atonement; both for what is past, 215
 And lest I be reserved, day after day,
 To load with crimes an overburthened soul,
 And be . . . what ye can dream not. I have prayed
 To God, and I have talked with my own heart,
 And have unravelled my entangled will, 220
 And have at length determined what is right.
 Art thou my friend Orsino? False or true?
 Pledge thy salvation ere I speak.

ORSINO.

I swear

To dedicate my cunning, and my strength,
 My silence, and whatever else is mine, 225
 To thy commands.

LUCRETIA.

You think we should devise

His death?

BEATRICE.

And execute what is devised,
 And suddenly. We must be brief and bold.

ORSINO.

And yet most cautious.

LUCRETIA.

For the jealous laws
 Would punish us with death and infamy 230
 For that which it became themselves to do.

BEATRICE.

Be cautious as ye may, but prompt. Orsino,

What are the means ?

ORSINO.

I know two dull, fierce outlaws,
Who think man's spirit as a worm's, and they
Would trample out, for any slight caprice, 235
The meanest or the noblest life. This mood
Is marketable here in Rome. They sell
What we now want.

LUCRETIA.

To-morrow before dawn,
Cenci will take us to that lonely rock,
Petrella, in the Apulian Apennines. 240
If he arrive there. . .

BEATRICE.

He must not arrive.

ORSINO.

Will it be dark before you reach the tower ?

LUCRETIA.

The sun will scarce be set.

BEATRICE.

But I remember
Two miles on this side of the fort, the road
Crosses a deep ravine ; 'tis rough and narrow, 245
And winds with short turns down the precipice ;
And in its depth there is a mighty rock,
Which has, from unimaginable years,
Sustained itself with terror and with toil
Over a gulph, and with the agony 250
With which it clings seems slowly coming down ;
Even as a wretched soul hour after hour,
Clings to the mass of life ; yet clinging, leans ;
And leaning, makes more dark the dread abyss
In which it fears to fall : beneath this crag 255
Huge as despair, as if in weariness,
The melancholy mountain yawns . . . below,
You hear but see not an impetuous torrent
Raging among the caverns, and a bridge
Crosses the chasm ; and high above there grow, 260
With intersecting trunks, from crag to crag,
Cedars, and yews, and pines ; whose tangled hair

Is matted in one solid roof of shade
By the dark ivy's twine. At noon-day here
'Tis twilight, and at sunset blackest night.

263

ORSINO.

Before you reach that bridge make some excuse
For spurring on your mules, or loitering
Until ...

BEATRICE.

What sound is that?

LUCRETIA.

Hark! No, it cannot be a servant's step;
It must be Cenci, unexpectedly
Returned ... Make some excuse for being here.

270

BEATRICE. (*to ORSINO, as she goes out*)
That step we hear approach must never pass
The bridge of which we spoke.

(*Exeunt LUCRETIA and BEATRICE.*)

ORSINO.

What shall I do?

Cenci must find me here, and I must bear
The imperious inquisition of his looks
As to what brought me hither: let me mask
Mine own in some inane and vacant smile.

275

Enter GIACOMO, in a hurried manner.

How! Have you ventured hither? Know you then
That Cenci is from home?

GIACOMO.

I sought him here;
And now must wait till he returns.

ORSINO.

Great God!

280

Weigh you the danger of this rashness?

GIACOMO.

Aye!

Does my destroyer know his danger? We
Are now no more, as once, parent and child,
But man to man; the oppressor to the oppressed;
The slanderer to the slandered; foe to foe:
He has cast Nature off, which was his shield,

285

And Nature casts him off, who is her shame;
And I spurn both. Is it a father's throat
Which I will shake, and say, I ask not gold;
I ask not happy years; nor memories 290
Of tranquil childhood; nor home-sheltered love;
Though all these hast thou torn from me, and more;
But only my fair fame; only one hoard
Of peace, which I thought hidden from thy hate,
Under the penury heaped on me by thee, 295
Or I will. . . God can understand and pardon,
Why should I speak with man?

ORSINO.

Be calm, dear friend.

GIACOMO.

Well, I will calmly tell you what he did.
This old Francesco Cenci, as you know,
Borrowed the dowry of my wife from me, 300
And then denied the loan; and left me so
In poverty, the which I sought to mend
By holding a poor office in the state.
It had been promised to me, and already
I bought new clothing for my ragged babes, 305
And my wife smiled; and my heart knew repose.
When Cenci's intercession, as I found,
Conferred this office on a wretch, whom thus
He paid for vilest service. I returned
With this ill news, and we sate sad together 310
Solacing our despondency with tears
Of such affection and unbroken faith
As temper life's worst bitterness; when he,
As he is wont, came to upbraid and curse,
Mocking our poverty, and telling us 315
Such was God's scourge for disobedient sons.
And then, that I might strike him dumb with shame,
I spoke of my wife's dowry; but he coined
A brief yet specious tale, how I had wasted
The sum in secret riot; and he saw 320
My wife was touched, and he went smiling forth.
And when I knew the impression he had made,
And felt my wife insult with silent scorn

My ardent truth, and look averse and cold,
I went forth too: but soon returned again; 323
Yet not so soon but that my wife had taught
My children her harsh thoughts, and they all cried,
"Give us clothes, father! Give us better food!
"What you in one night squander were enough
"For months!" I looked, and saw that home was hell. 330
And to that hell will I return no more
Until mine enemy has rendered up
Atonement, or, as he gave life to me
I will, reversing nature's law . . .

ORSINO.

Trust me,
The compensation which thou seekest here 335
Will be denied.

GIACOMO.

Then . . . Are you not my friend?
Did you not hint at the alternative,
Upon the brink of which you see I stand,
The other day when we conversed together?
My wrongs were then less. That word parricide, 340
Although I am resolved, haunts me like fear.

ORSINO.

It must be fear itself, for the bare word
Is hollow mockery. Mark, how wisest God
Draws to one point the threads of a just doom,
So sanctifying it: what you devise 345
Is, as it were, accomplished.

GIACOMO.

Is he dead?

ORSINO.

His grave is ready. Know that since we met
Cenci has done an outrage to his daughter.

GIACOMO.

What outrage?

ORSINO.

That she speaks not, but you may
Conceive such half conjectures as I do, 350
From her fixed paleness, and the lofty grief
Of her stern brow bent on the idle air,

And her severe unmodulated voice,
Drowning both tenderness and dread; and last
From this; that whilst her step-mother and I, 355
Bewildered in our horror, talked together
With obscure hints; both self-misunderstood
And darkly guessing, stumbling, in our talk,
Over the truth, and yet to its revenge,
She interrupted us, and with a look 260
Which told before she spoke it, he must die:...

GIACOMO.

It is enough. My doubts are well appeased;
There is a higher reason for the act
Than mine; there is a holier judge than me,
A more unblamed avenger. Beatrice, 303
Who in the gentleness of thy sweet youth
Hast never trodden on a worm, or bruised
A living flower, but thou hast pitied it
With needless tears! Fair sister, thou in whom
Men wondered how such loveliness and wisdom 370
Did not destroy each other! Is there made
Ravage of thee? O, heart, I ask no more
Justification! Shall I wait, Orsino,
Till he return, and stab him at the door?

ORSINO.

Not so; some accident might interpose 375
To rescue him from what is now most sure;
And you are unprovided where to fly,
How to excuse or to conceal. Nay, listen:
All is contrived; success is so assured
That. . .

Enter BEATRICE.

BEATRICE.

'Tis my brother's voice! You know me not? 380

GIACOMO.

My sister, my lost sister!

BEATRICE.

Lost indeed!

I see Orsino has talked with you, and
That you conjecture things too horrible

To speak, yet far less than the truth. Now, stay not,
 He might return: yet kiss me; I shall know 385
 That then thou hast consented to his death.
 Farewell, farewell! Let piety to God,
 Brotherly love, justice and clemency,
 And all things that make tender hardest hearts
 Make thine hard, brother. Answer not. . . farewell. 390
(Exeunt severally.)

SCENE II.

A MEAN APARTMENT IN GIACOMO'S HOUSE. GIACOMO ALONE.

GIACOMO.

'Tis midnight, and Orsino comes not yet.

(Thunder, and the sound of a storm.)

What! can the everlasting elements
 Feel with a worm like man? If so the shaft
 Of mercy-wingèd lightning would not fall
 On stones and trees. My wife and children sleep: 5
 They are now living in unmeaning dreams:
 But I must wake, still doubting if that deed
 Be just which was most necessary. O,
 Thou un replenished lamp! whose narrow fire
 Is shaken by the wind, and on whose edge 10
 Devouring darkness hovers! Thou small flame,
 Which, as a dying pulse rises and falls,
 Still flickerest up and down, how very soon,
 Did I not feed thee, wouldst thou fail and be
 As thou hadst never been! So wastes and sinks 15
 Even now, perhaps, the life that kindled mine:
 But that no power can fill with vital oil
 That broken lamp of flesh. Ha! 'tis the blood
 Which fed these veins that ebbs till all is cold:
 It is the form that moulded mine that sinks 20
 Into the white and yellow spasms of death:
 It is the soul by which mine was arrayed
 In God's immortal likeness which now stands
 Naked before Heaven's judgment seat!

(*a bell strikes*) One! Two!
The hours crawl on; and when my hairs are white, 25
My son will then perhaps be waiting thus,
Tortured between just hate and vain remorse;
Chiding the tardy messenger of news
Like those which I expect. I almost wish
He be not dead, although my wrongs are great; 30
Yet... 'tis Orsino's step...

Enter ORSINO.

Speak!

ORSINO.

I am come

To say he has escaped.

GIACOMO.

Escaped!

ORSINO.

And safe

Within Petrella. He past by the spot
Appointed for the deed an hour too soon.

GIACOMO.

Are we the fools of such contingencies? 35
And do we waste in blind misgivings thus
The hours when we should act? Then wind and thunder,
Which seemed to howl his knell, is the loud laughter
With which Heaven mocks our weakness! I henceforth
Will ne'er repent of aught designed or done 40
But my repentance.

ORSINO.

See, the lamp is out.

GIACOMO.

If no remorse is ours when the dim air
Has drank this innocent flame, why should we quail
When Cenci's life, that light by which ill spirits
See the worst deeds they prompt, shall sink for ever? 45
No, I am hardened.

ORSINO.

Why, what need of this?

Who feared the pale intrusion of remorse
In a just deed? Altho' our first plan failed,

Doubt not but he will soon be laid to rest.
But light the lamp; let us not talk i' the dark. 50

GIACOMO (*lighting the lamp*).

And yet once quenched I cannot thus relume
My father's life: do you not think his ghost
Might plead that argument with God?

ORSINO.

Once gone

You cannot now recall your sister's peace;
Your own extinguished years of youth and hope; 55
Nor your wife's bitter words; nor all the taunts
Which, from the prosperous, weak misfortune takes;
Nor your dead mother; nor. . .

GIACOMO.

O, speak no more!

I am resolved, although this very hand
Must quench the life that animated it. 60

ORSINO.

There is no need of that. Listen: you know
Olimpio, the castellan of Petrella
In old Colonna's time; him whom your father
Degraded from his post? And Marzio,
That desperate wretch, whom he deprived last year 65
Of a reward of blood, well earned and due?

GIACOMO.

I knew Olimpio; and they say he hated
Old Cenci so, that in his silent rage
His lips grew white only to see him pass.
Of Marzio I know nothing.

ORSINO.

Marzio's hate 70

Matches Olimpio's. I have sent these men,
But in your name, and as at your request,
To talk with Beatrice and Lucretia.

GIACOMO.

Only to talk?

ORSINO.

The moments which even now
Pass onward to tomorrow's midnight hour 75

May memorize their flight with death: ere then
They must have talked, and may perhaps have done,
And made an end....

GIACOMO.

Listen! What sound is that?

ORSINO.

The housedog moans, and the beams crack: nought else.

GIACOMO.

It is my wife complaining in her sleep: 80
I doubt not she is saying bitter things
Of me; and all my children round her dreaming
That I deny them sustenance.

ORSINO.

Whilst he
Who truly took it from them, and who fills
Their hungry rest with bitterness, now sleeps 85
Lapped in bad pleasures, and triumphantly
Mocks thee in visions of successful hate
Too like the truth of day.

GIACOMO.

If e'er he wakes
Again, I will not trust to hireling hands...

ORSINO.

Why, that were well. I must be gone; good night: 90
When next we meet—may all be done!

GIACOMO.

And all
Forgotten: Oh, that I had never been! (*Exeunt.*)

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

AN APARTMENT IN THE CASTLE OF PETRELLA. ENTER CENCI.

CENCI.

She comes not; yet I left her even now
Vanquished and faint. She knows the penalty
Of her delay: yet what if threats are vain?
Am I not now within Petrella's moat?
Or fear I still the eyes and ears of Rome? 5
Might I not drag her by the golden hair?
Stamp on her? Keep her sleepless till her brain
Be overworn? Tame her with chains and famine?
Less would suffice. Yet so to leave undone
What I most seek! No, 'tis her stubborn will 10
Which by its own consent shall stoop as low
As that which drags it down.

Enter LUCRETIA.

Thou loathèd wretch!
Hide thee from my abhorrence; Fly, begone!
Yet stay! Bid Beatrice come hither.

LUCRETIA.

Oh,
Husband! I pray for thine own wretched sake 15
Heed what thou dost. A man who walks like thee
Thro' crimes, and thro' the danger of his crimes,
Each hour may stumble o'er a sudden grave.
And thou art old; thy hairs are hoary gray;
As thou wouldst save thyself from death and hell, 20
Pity thy daughter; give her to some friend
In marriage: so that she may tempt thee not
To hatred, or worse thoughts, if worse there be.

CENCI.

What! like her sister who has found a home
To mock my hate from with prosperity? 25
Strange ruin shall destroy both her and thee

And all that yet remain. My death may be
Rapid, her destiny outspeeds it. Go,
Bid her come hither, and before my mood
Be changed, lest I should drag her by the hair. 30

LUCRETIA.

She sent me to thee, husband. At thy presence
She fell, as thou dost know, into a trance;
And in that trance she heard a voice which said,
"Cenci must die! Let him confess himself!
"Even now the accusing Angel waits to hear 35
"If God, to punish his enormous crimes,
"Harden his dying heart!"

CENCI.

Why—such things are. . .
No doubt divine revealings may be made.
'Tis plain I have been favoured from above,
For when I cursed my sons they died.—Aye. . . so. . . 40
As to the right or wrong that's talk. . . repentance. . .
Repentance is an easy moment's work
And more depends on God than me. Well. . . well. . .
I must give up the greater point, which was
To poison and corrupt her soul. 45
(*A pause; Lucretia approaches anxiously, and then shrinks
back as he speaks.*)

One, two;

Aye. . . Rocco and Cristofano my curse
Strangled: and Giacomo, I think, will find
Life a worse Hell than that beyond the grave:
Beatrice shall, if there be skill in hate,
Die in despair, blaspheming: to Bernardo, 50
He is so innocent, I will bequeath
The memory of these deeds, and make his youth
The sepulchre of hope, where evil thoughts
Shall grow like weeds on a neglected tomb.
When all is done, out in the wide Campagna, 55
I will pile up my silver and my gold;
My costly robes, paintings and tapestries;
My parchments and all records of my wealth,
And make a bonfire in my joy, and leave
Of my possessions nothing but my name; 60

Which shall be an inheritance to strip
Its wearer bare as infamy. That done,
My soul, which is a scourge, will I resign
Into the hands of him who wielded it;
Be it for its own punishment or theirs, 65
He will not ask it of me till the lash
Be broken in its last and deepest wound;
Until its hate be all inflicted. Yet,
Lest death outspeed my purpose, let me make
Short work and sure. . . (going)

LUCRETIA. (*Stops him*)

Oh, stay! It was a feint: 70
She had no vision, and she heard no voice.
I said it but to awe thee.

CENCI.

That is well.
Vile palterer with the sacred truth of God,
Be thy soul choked with that blaspheming lie!
For Beatrice worse terrors are in store 75
To bend her to my will.

LUCRETIA.

Oh! to what will?
What cruel sufferings more than she has known
Canst thou inflict?

CENCI.

Andrea! Go call my daughter,
And if she comes not tell her that I come.
What sufferings? I will drag her, step by step, 80
Thro' infamies unheard of among men:
She shall stand shelterless in the broad noon
Of public scorn, for acts blazoned abroad,
One among which shall be . . . What? Canst thou guess?
She shall become, (for what she most abhors 85
Shall have a fascination to entrap
Her loathing will), to her own conscious self
All she appears to others; and when dead,
As she shall die unshrived and unforgiven,
A rebel to her father and her God, 90
Her corpse shall be abandoned to the hounds;
Her name shall be the terror of the earth;

Her spirit shall approach the throne of God
Plague-spotted with my curses. I will make
Body and soul a monstrous lump of ruin.

95

Enter ANDREA.

ANDREA.

The lady Beatrice . . .

CENCI.

Speak, pale slave! What

Said she?

ANDREA.

My Lord, 'twas what she looked; she said:
"Go tell my father that I see the gulph
"Of Hell between us two, which he may pass,
"I will not."

(Exit ANDREA.)

CENCI.

Go thou quick, Lucretia,
Tell her to come; yet let her understand
Her coming is consent: and say, moreover,
That if she come not I will curse her. *(Exit LUCRETIA.)*

100

Ha!

With what but with a father's curse doth God
Panic-strike armèd victory, and make pale
Cities in their prosperity? The world's Father
Must grant a parent's prayer against his child
Be he who asks even what men call me.
Will not the deaths of her rebellious brothers
Awe her before I speak? For I on them
Did imprecate quick ruin, and it came.

105

110

Enter LUCRETIA.

Well; what? Speak, wretch!

LUCRETIA.

She said, "I cannot come;
"Go tell my father that I see a torrent
"Of his own blood raging between us."

CENCI *(kneeling)*.

God!

Hear me! If this most specious mass of flesh,
Which thou hast made my daughter; this my blood,

115

This particle of my divided being;
 Or rather, this my bane and my disease,
 Whose sight infects and poisons me; this devil
 Which sprung from me as from a hell, was meant 120
 To aught good use; if her bright loveliness
 Was kindled to illumine this dark world;
 If nursed by thy selectest dew of love
 Such virtues blossom in her as should make
 The peace of life, I pray thee for my sake, 125
 As thou the common God and Father art
 Of her, and me, and all; reverse that doom!
 Earth, in the name of God, let her food be
 Poison, until she be encrusted round
 With leprous stains! Heaven, rain upon her head 130
 The blistering drops of the Maremma's dew,
 Till she be speckled like a toad; parch up
 Those love-enkindled lips, warp those fine limbs
 To loathèd lameness! All beholding sun,
 Strike in thine envy those life-darting eyes 135
 With thine own blinding beams!

LUCRETIA.

Peace! Peace!

For thine own sake unsay those dreadful words.
 When high God grants he punishes such prayers.

CENCI.

(Leaping up, and throwing his right hand towards Heaven)

He does his will, I mine! This in addition,
 That if she have a child . . .

LUCRETIA.

Horrible thought! 140

CENCI.

That if she ever have a child; and thou,
 Quick Nature! I adjure thee by thy God,
 That thou be fruitful in her, and encrease
 And multiply, fulfilling his command,
 And my deep imprecation! May it be 145
 A hideous likeness of herself, that as
 From a distorting mirror, she may see
 Her image mixed with what she most abhors,
 Smiling upon her from her nursing breast.

And that the child may from its infancy 150
Grow, day by day, more wicked and deformed,
Turning her mother's love to misery:
And that both she and it may live until
It shall repay her care and pain with hate,
Or what may else be more unnatural. 155
So he may hunt her through the clamorous scoffs
Of the loud world to a dishonoured grave.
Shall I revoke this curse? Go, bid her come,
Before my words are chronicled in heaven. (*Exit LUCRETIA.*)
I do not feel as if I were a man, 160
But like a fiend appointed to chastise
The offences of some unremembered world.
My blood is running up and down my veins;
A fearful pleasure makes it prick and tingle:
I feel a giddy sickness of strange awe; 165
My heart is beating with an expectation
Of horrid joy.

Enter LUCRETIA.

What? Speak!

LUCRETIA.

She bids thee curse;
And if thy curses, as they cannot do,
Could kill her soul...

CENCI.

She would not come. 'Tis well,
I can do both: first take what I demand, 170
And then extort concession. To thy chamber!
Fly ere I spurn thee: and beware this night
That thou cross not my footsteps. It were safer
To come between the tiger and his prey. (*Exit LUCRETIA.*)
It must be late; mine eyes grow weary dim 175
With unaccustomed heaviness of sleep.
Conscience! Oh, thou most insolent of lies!
They say that sleep, that healing dew of heaven,
Steeps not in balm the foldings of the brain
Which thinks thee an impostor. I will go 180
First to belie thee with an hour of rest,
Which will be deep and calm, I feel: and then...
O, multitudinous Hell, the fiends will shake

Thine arches with the laughter of their joy!
There shall be lamentation heard in Heaven 185
As o'er an angel fallen; and upon Earth
All good shall droop and sicken, and ill things
Shall with a spirit of unnatural life
Stir and be quickened . . . even as I am now. (*Exit.*)

SCENE II.

BEFORE THE CASTLE OF PETRELLA. ENTER BEATRICE AND
LUCRETIA ABOVE ON THE RAMPARTS.

BEATRICE.

They come not yet.

LUCRETIA.

'Tis scarce midnight.

BEATRICE.

How slow
Behind the course of thought, even sick with speed,
Lags leaden-footed time!

LUCRETIA.

The minutes pass . . .
If he should wake before the deed is done?

BEATRICE.

O, Mother! He must never wake again. 5
What thou hast said persuades me that our act
Will but dislodge a spirit of deep hell
Out of a human form.

LUCRETIA.

'Tis true he spoke
Of death and judgment with strange confidence
For one so wicked; as a man believing 10
In God, yet recking not of good or ill.
And yet to die without confession! . . .

BEATRICE.

Oh!

Believe that Heaven is merciful and just,
And will not add our dread necessity

To the amount of his offences.

Enter OLIMPIO and MARZIO, below.

LUCRETIA.

See,

15

They come.

BEATRICE.

All mortal things must hasten thus
To their dark end. Let us go down.

(Exeunt LUCRETIA and BEATRICE from above.)

OLIMPIO.

How feel you to this work?

MARZIO.

As one who thinks
A thousand crowns excellent market price
For an old murderer's life. Your cheeks are pale.

20

OLIMPIO.

It is the white reflexion of your own,
Which you call pale.

MARZIO.

Is that their natural hue?

OLIMPIO.

Or 'tis my hate and the deferred desire
To wreak it, which extinguishes their blood.

MARZIO.

You are inclined then to this business?

OLIMPIO.

Aye.

25

If one should bribe me with a thousand crowns
To kill a serpent which had stung my child,
I could not be more willing.

Enter BEATRICE and LUCRETIA, below.

Noble ladies!

BEATRICE.

Are ye resolved?

OLIMPIO.

Is he asleep?

MARZIO.

Is all

Quiet?

LUCRETIA.

I mixed an opiate with his drink: 30
He sleeps so soundly...

BEATRICE.

That his death will be
But as a change of sin-chastising dreams,
A dark continuance of the Hell within him,
Which God extinguish! But ye are resolved?
Ye know it is a high and holy deed? 35

OLIMPIO.

We are resolved.

MARZIO.

As to the how this act
Be warranted, it rests with you.

BEATRICE.

Well, follow!

OLIMPIO.

Hush! Hark! What noise is that?

MARZIO.

Ha! some one comes!

BEATRICE.

Ye conscience-stricken cravens, rock to rest
Your baby hearts. It is the iron gate, 40
Which ye left open, swinging to the wind,
That enters whistling as in scorn. Come, follow!
And be your steps like mine, light, quick and bold.
(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE III.

AN APARTMENT IN THE CASTLE. ENTER BEATRICE AND
LUCRETIA.

LUCRETIA.

They are about it now.

BEATRICE.

Nay, it is done.

LUCRETIA.

I have not heard him groan.

BEATRICE.

He will not groan.

LUCRETIA.

What sound is that?

BEATRICE.

List! 'tis the tread of feet

About his bed.

LUCRETIA.

My God!

If he be now a cold stiff corpse...

BEATRICE.

O, fear not

What may be done, but what is left undone:
The act seals all.

5

Enter OLIMPIO and MARZIO.

Is it accomplished?

MARZIO.

What?

OLIMPIO.

Did you not call?

BEATRICE.

When?

OLIMPIO.

Now.

BEATRICE.

I ask if all is over?

OLIMPIO.

We dare not kill an old and sleeping man;
His thin grey hair, his stern and reverent brow,
His veined hands crossed on his heaving breast,
And the calm innocent sleep in which he lay,
Quelled me. Indeed, indeed, I cannot do it.

10

MARZIO.

But I was bolder; for I chid Olimpio,
And bade him bear his wrongs to his own grave
And leave me the reward. And now my knife
Touched the loose wrinkled throat, when the old man
Stirred in his sleep, and said, "God! hear, O, hear,
"A father's curse! What, art thou not our father?"

15

And then he laughed. I knew it was the ghost 20
Of my dead father speaking through his lips,
And could not kill him.

BEATRICE.

Miserable slaves!
Where, if ye dare not kill a sleeping man,
Found ye the boldness to return to me
With such a deed undone? Base palterers! 25
Cowards and traitors! Why, the very conscience
Which ye would sell for gold and for revenge
Is an equivocation: it sleeps over
A thousand daily acts disgracing men;
And when a deed where mercy insults heaven... 30
Why do I talk?

(Snatching a dagger from one of them and raising it.)

Hadst thou a tongue to say,
She murdered her own father, I must do it!
But never dream ye shall outlive him long!

OLIMPIO.

Stop, for God's sake!

MARZIO.

I will go back and kill him.

OLIMPIO.

Give me the weapon, we must do thy will. 35

BEATRICE.

Take it! Depart! Return! *(Exeunt OLIMPIO and MARZIO.)*

How pale thou art!

We do but that which 'twere a deadly crime
To leave undone.

LUCRETIA.

Would it were done!

BEATRICE.

Even whilst
That doubt is passing through your mind, the world 40
Is conscious of a change. Darkness and hell
Have swallowed up the vapour they sent forth
To blacken the sweet light of life. My breath
Comes, methinks, lighter, and the jellied blood
Runs freely thro' my veins. Hark!

Enter OLIMPIO and MARZIO.

He is...

OLIMPIO.

Dead!

MARZIO.

We strangled him that there might be no blood; 45
And then we threw his heavy corpse i' the garden
Under the balcony; 'twill seem it fell.

BEATRICE. *(giving them a bag of coin)*
Here, take this gold, and hasten to your homes.
And, Marzio, because thou wast only awed
By that which made me tremble, wear thou this! 50

(Clothes him in a rich mantle)
It was the mantle which my grandfather
Wore in his high prosperity, and men
Envied his state: so may they envy thine.
Thou wert a weapon in the hand of God
To a just use. Live long and thrive! And, mark, 55
If thou hast crimes, repent: this deed is none.

(A horn is sounded.)

LUCRETIA.

Hark, 'tis the castle horn; my God! it sounds
Like the last trump.

BEATRICE.

Some tedious guest is coming.

LUCRETIA.

The drawbridge is let down; there is a tramp
Of horses in the court; fly, hide yourselves! 60

(Exeunt OLIMPIO and MARZIO.)

BEATRICE.

Let us retire to counterfeit deep rest;
I scarcely need to counterfeit it now:
The spirit which doth reign within these limbs
Seems strangely undisturbed. I could even sleep
Fearless and calm: all ill is surely past. *(Exeunt.)* 65

SCENE IV.

ANOTHER APARTMENT IN THE CASTLE. ENTER ON ONE SIDE THE
LEGATE SAVELLA, INTRODUCED BY A SERVANT, AND ON THE
OTHER LUCRETIA AND BERNARDO.

SAVELLA.

Lady, my duty to his Holiness
Be my excuse that thus unseasonably
I break upon your rest. I must speak with
Count Cenci; doth he sleep?

LUCRETIA. (*in a hurried and confused manner*)

I think he sleeps;

Yet wake him not, I pray, spare me awhile, 5
He is a wicked and a wrathful man;
Should he be roused out of his sleep to-night,
Which is, I know, a hell of angry dreams,
It were not well; indeed it were not well.
Wait till day break. . . . (*aside*) O, I am deadly sick! 10

SAVELLA.

I grieve thus to distress you, but the Count
Must answer charges of the gravest import,
And suddenly; such my commission is.

LUCRETIA. (*with increased agitation*)

I dare not rouse him: I know none who dare. . .
'Twere perilous; . . . you might as safely waken 15
A serpent; or a corpse in which some fiend
Were laid to sleep.

SAVELLA.

Lady, my moments here
Are counted. I must rouse him from his sleep,
Since none else dare.

LUCRETIA (*aside*.)

O, terror! O, despair! 19

(*To Bernardo*) Bernardo, conduct you the Lord Legate to
Your father's chamber. (*Exeunt SAVELLA and BERNARDO.*)

Enter BEATRICE.

BEATRICE.

'Tis a messenger
Come to arrest the culprit who now stands
Before the throne of unappealable God.
Both Earth and Heaven, consenting arbiters,
Acquit our deed.

LUCRETIA.

Oh, agony of fear! 25
Would that he yet might live! Even now I heard
The Legate's followers whisper as they passed
They had a warrant for his instant death.
All was prepared by unforbidden means
Which we must pay so dearly, having done. 30
Even now they search the tower, and find the body;
Now they suspect the truth; now they consult
Before they come to tax us with the fact;
O, horrible, 'tis all discovered!

BEATRICE.

Mother,
What is done wisely, is done well. Be bold 35
As thou art just. 'Tis like a truant child
To fear that others know what thou hast done,
Even from thine own strong consciousness, and thus
Write on unsteady eyes and altered cheeks
All thou wouldst hide. Be faithful to thyself, 40
And fear no other witness but thy fear.
For if, as cannot be, some circumstance
Should rise in accusation, we can blind
Suspicion with such cheap astonishment,
Or overbear it with such guiltless pride, 45
As murderers cannot feign. The deed is done,
And what may follow now regards not me.
I am as universal as the light;
Free as the earth-surrounding air; as firm
As the world's centre. Consequence, to me, 50
Is as the wind which strikes the solid rock
But shakes it not. (*A cry within and tumult*)

VOICES.

Murder! Murder! Murder!

Enter BERNARDO and SAVELLA.

SAVELLA (*to his followers*).

Go search the castle round; sound the alarm;
Look to the gates that none escape!

BEATRICE.

What now?

BERNARDO.

I know not what to say... my father's dead. 55

BEATRICE.

How; dead! he only sleeps; you mistake, brother.
His sleep is very calm, very like death;
'Tis wonderful how well a tyrant sleeps.
He is not dead?

BERNARDO.

Dead; murdered.

LUCRETIA. (*with extreme agitation*)

Oh, no, no,

He is not murdered though he may be dead; 60
I have alone the keys of those apartments.

SAVELLA.

Ha! Is it so?

BEATRICE.

My Lord, I pray excuse us;
We will retire; my mother is not well:
She seems quite overcome with this strange horror.

(*Exeunt LUCRETIA and BEATRICE.*)

SAVELLA.

Can you suspect who may have murdered him? 65

BERNARDO.

I know not what to think.

SAVELLA.

Can you name any
Who had an interest in his death?

BERNARDO.

Alas!

I can name none who had not, and those most
Who most lament that such a deed is done;
My mother, and my sister, and myself. 70

SAVELLA.

'Tis strange! There were clear marks of violence.

I found the old man's body in the moonlight
Hanging beneath the window of his chamber,
Among the branches of a pine: he could not
Have fallen there, for all his limbs lay heaped 75
And effortless; 'tis true there was no blood...
Favour me, Sir; it much imports your house
That all should be made clear; to tell the ladies
That I request their presence. (*Exit* BERNARDO.)

Enter Guards bringing in MARZIO.

GUARD.

We have one.

OFFICER.

My Lord, we found this ruffian and another 80
Lurking among the rocks; there is no doubt
But that they are the murderers of Count Cenci:
Each had a bag of coin; this fellow wore
A gold-inwoven robe, which shining bright
Under the dark rocks to the glimmering moon 85
Betrayed them to our notice; the other fell
Desperately fighting.

SAVELLA.

What does he confess?

OFFICER.

He keeps firm silence; but these lines found on him
May speak.

SAVELLA.

Their language is at least sincere. (*reads*)

TO THE LADY BEATRICE.

"That the atonement of what my nature 90
"Sickens to conjecture may soon arrive,
"I send thee, at thy brother's desire, those
"Who will speak and do more than I dare
"Write... Thy devoted servant, ORSINO."

Enter LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, and BERNARDO.

Knowest thou this writing, Lady?

BEATRICE.

No.

SAVELLA.

Nor thou? 95

LUCRETIA.

(Her conduct throughout the scene is marked by extreme agitation.)

Where was it found? What is it? It should be Orsino's hand! It speaks of that strange horror Which never yet found utterance, but which made Between that hapless child and her dead father A gulph of obscure hatred.

SAVELLA.

Is it so?

100

Is it true, Lady, that thy father did
Such outrages as to awaken in thee
Unfilial hate?

BEATRICE.

Not hate 'twas more than hate:
This is most true, yet wherefore question me?

SAVELLA.

There is a deed demanding question done;
Thou hast a secret which will answer not.

105

BEATRICE.

What sayest? My Lord, your words are bold and rash.

SAVELLA.

I do arrest all present in the name
Of the Pope's Holiness. You must to Rome.

LUCRETIA.

O, not to Rome! Indeed we are not guilty.

110

BEATRICE.

Guilty! Who dares talk of guilt? My Lord,
I am more innocent of parricide
Than is a child born fatherless... Dear Mother,
Your gentleness and patience are no shield
For this keen-judging world, this two-edged lie,
Which seems, but is not. What! will human laws,
Rather will ye who are their ministers,
Bar all access to retribution first,
And then, when heaven doth interpose to do
What ye neglect, arming familiar things
To the redress of an unwonted crime,
Make ye the victims who demanded it

115

120

Culprits? 'Tis ye are culprits! That poor wretch
Who stands so pale, and trembling, and amazed,
If it be true he murdered Cenci, was
A sword in the right hand of justest God.
Wherefore should I have wielded it? Unless
The crimes which mortal tongue dare never name
God therefore scruples to avenge.

125

SAVELLA.

You own

That you desired his death?

BEATRICE.

It would have been
A crime no less than his, if for one moment
That fierce desire had faded in my heart.
'Tis true I did believe, and hope, and pray,
Aye, I even knew . . . for God is wise and just,
That some strange sudden death hung over him.
'Tis true that this did happen, and most true
There was no other rest for me on earth,
No other hope in Heaven . . . now what of this?

130

135

SAVELLA.

Strange thoughts beget strange deeds; and here are both:
I judge thee not.

BEATRICE.

And yet, if you arrest me,
You are the judge and executioner
Of that which is the life of life: the breath
Of accusation kills an innocent name,
And leaves for lame acquittal the poor life
Which is a mask without it. 'Tis most false
That I am guilty of foul parricide;
Although I must rejoice, for justest cause,
That other hands have sent my father's soul
To ask the mercy he denied to me.
Now leave us free: stain not a noble house
With vague surmises of rejected crime;
Add to our sufferings and your own neglect
No heavier sum: let them have been enough:
Leave us the wreck we have.

140

145

150

SAVELLA.

I dare not, Lady.

I pray that you prepare yourselves for Rome : 155
There the Pope's further pleasure will be known.

LUCRETIA.

O, not to Rome! O, take us not to Rome!

BEATRICE.

Why not to Rome, dear mother? There as here
Our innocence is as an armed heel
To trample accusation. God is there 160
As here, and with his shadow ever clothes
The innocent, the injured and the weak;
And such are we. Cheer up, dear Lady, lean
On me; collect your wandering thoughts. My Lord,
As soon as you have taken some refreshment, 165
And had all such examinations made
Upon the spot, as may be necessary
To the full understanding of this matter,
We shall be ready. Mother; will you come?

LUCRETIA.

Ha! they will bind us to the rack, and wrest 170
Self-accusation from our agony!
Will Giacomo be there? Orsino? Marzio?
All present; all confronted; all demanding
Each from the other's countenance the thing
Which is in every heart! O, misery! 175

(She faints, and is borne out.)

SAVELLA.

She faints: an ill appearance this.

BEATRICE.

My Lord,

She knows not yet the uses of the world.
She fears that power is as a beast which grasps
And loosens not: a snake whose look transmutes 180
All things to guilt which is its nutriment.
She cannot know how well the supine slaves
Of blind authority read the truth of things
When written on a brow of guilelessness:
She sees not yet triumphant Innocence

Stand at the judgment-seat of mortal man, 185
A judge and an accuser of the wrong
Which drags it there. Prepare yourself, my Lord;
Our suite will join yours in the court below. (*Exeunt.*)

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

AN APARTMENT IN ORSINO'S PALACE. ENTER ORSINO AND GIACOMO.

GIACOMO.

Do evil deeds thus quickly come to end?
O, that the vain remorse which must chastise
Crimes done, had but as loud a voice to warn
As its keen sting is mortal to avenge!
O, that the hour when present had cast off 5
The mantle of its mystery, and shewn
The ghastly form with which it now returns
When its scared game is roused, cheering the hounds
Of conscience to their prey! Alas! Alas!
It was a wicked thought, a piteous deed, 10
To kill an old and hoary-headed father.

ORSINO.

It has turned out unluckily, in truth.

GIACOMO.

To violate the sacred doors of sleep;
To cheat kind nature of the placid death
Which she prepares for overwearied age; 15
To drag from Heaven an unrepentant soul
Which might have quenched in reconciling prayers
A life of burning crimes...

ORSINO.

You cannot say

I urged you to the deed.

GIACOMO.

O, had I never
Found in thy smooth and ready countenance 20
The mirror of my darkest thoughts; hadst thou
Never with hints and questions made me look
Upon the monster of my thought, until
It grew familiar to desire . . .

ORSINO.

'Tis thus
Men cast the blame of their unprosperous acts 25
Upon the abettors of their own resolve;
Or any thing but their weak, guilty selves.
And yet, confess the truth, it is the peril
In which you stand that gives you this pale sickness
Of penitence; Confess 'tis fear disguised 30
From its own shame that takes the mantle now
Of thin remorse. What if we yet were safe?

GIACOMO.

How can that be? Already Beatrice,
Lucretia and the murderer are in prison.
I doubt not officers are, whilst we speak, 35
Sent to arrest us.

ORSINO.

I have all prepared
For instant flight. We can escape even now,
So we take fleet occasion by the hair.

GIACOMO.

Rather expire in tortures, as I may.
What! will you cast by self-accusing flight 40
Assured conviction upon Beatrice?
She, who alone in this unnatural work,
Stands like God's angel ministered upon
By fiends; avenging such a nameless wrong
As turns black parricide to piety; 45
Whilst we for basest ends . . . I fear, Orsino,
While I consider all your words and looks,
Comparing them with your proposal now,
That you must be a villain. For what end
Could you engage in such a perilous crime, 50
Training me on with hints, and signs, and smiles,

Even to this gulph? Thou art no liar? No,
Thou art a lie! Traitor and murderer!
Coward and slave! But, no, defend thyself; (*drawing.*)
Let the sword speak what the indignant tongue 55
Disdains to brand thee with.

ORSINO.

Put up your weapon.
Is it the desperation of your fear
Makes you thus rash and sudden with a friend,
Now ruined for your sake? If honest anger
Have moved you, know, that what I just proposed 60
Was but to try you. As for me, I think,
Thankless affection led me to this point,
From which, if my firm temper could repent,
I cannot now recede. Even whilst we speak
The ministers of justice wait below: 65
They grant me these brief moments. Now if you
Have any word of melancholy comfort
To speak to your pale wife, 'twere best to pass
Out at the postern, and avoid them so.

GIACOMO.

O, generous friend! How canst thou pardon me? 70
Would that my life could purchase thine!

ORSINO.

That wish
Now comes a day too late. Haste; fare thee well!
Hear'st thou not steps along the corridor? (*Exit GIACOMO.*)
I'm sorry for it; but the guards are waiting
At his own gate, and such was my contrivance 75
That I might rid me both of him and them.
I thought to act a solemn comedy
Upon the painted scene of this new world,
And to attain my own peculiar ends
By some such plot of mingled good and ill 80
As others weave; but there arose a Power
Which graspt and snapped the threads of my device
And turned it to a net of ruin . . . Ha! (*a shout is heard.*)
Is that my name I hear proclaimed abroad?
But I will pass, wrapt in a vile disguise; 85
Rags on my back, and a false innocence

Upon my face, thro' the misdeeming crowd
Which judges by what seems. 'Tis easy then
For a new name and for a country new,
And a new life, fashioned on old desires, 90
To change the honours of abandoned Rome.
And these must be the masks of that within,
Which must remain unaltered. . . Oh, I fear
That what is past will never let me rest!
Why, when none else is conscious, but myself, 95
Of my misdeeds, should my own heart's contempt
Trouble me? Have I not the power to fly
My own reproaches? Shall I be the slave
Of . . . what? A word? which those of this false world
Employ against each other, not themselves; 100
As men wear daggers not for self-offence.
But if I am mistaken, where shall I
Find the disguise to hide me from myself,
As now I skulk from every other eye? (*Exit.*)

SCENE II.

A HALL OF JUSTICE. CAMILLO, JUDGES &C. ARE DISCOVERED
SEATED; MARZIO IS LED IN.

FIRST JUDGE.

Accused, do you persist in your denial?
I ask you, are you innocent, or guilty?
I demand who were the participators
In your offence? Speak truth and the whole truth.

MARZIO.

My God! I did not kill him; I know nothing; 5
Olimpio sold the robe to me from which
You would infer my guilt.

SECOND JUDGE.

Away with him!

FIRST JUDGE.

Dare you, with lips yet white from the rack's kiss
Speak false? Is it so soft a questioner,

That you would bandy lover's talk with it 10
Till it wind out your life and soul? Away!

MARZIO.

Spare me! O, spare! I will confess.

FIRST JUDGE.

Then speak.

MARZIO.

I strangled him in his sleep.

FIRST JUDGE.

Who urged you to it?

MARZIO.

His own son Giacomo, and the young prelate
Orsino sent me to Petrella; there
The ladies Beatrice and Lucretia
Tempted me with a thousand crowns, and I
And my companion forthwith murdered him.
Now let me die.

FIRST JUDGE.

This sounds as bad as truth. Guards, there, 20
Lead forth the prisoners!

Enter LUCRETIA, BEATRICE *and* GIACOMO, *guarded.*

Look upon this man;

When did you see him last?

BEATRICE.

We never saw him.

MARZIO.

You know me too well, Lady Beatrice.

BEATRICE.

I know thee! How? where? when?

MARZIO.

You know 'twas I

Whom you did urge with menaces and bribes 25
To kill your father. When the thing was done
You clothed me in a robe of woven gold
And bade me thrive: how I have thriven, you see.
You, my Lord Giacomo, Lady Lucretia,
You know that what I speak is true.

(BEATRICE advances towards him; he covers his face, and shrinks back.) O, dart 30

The terrible resentment of those eyes
On the dead earth! Turn them away from me!
They wound: 'twas torture forced the truth. My Lords,
Having said this let me be led to death.

BEATRICE.

Poor wretch, I pity thee: yet stay awhile. 35

CAMILLO.

Guards, lead him not away.

BEATRICE.

Cardinal Camillo,

You have a good repute for gentleness
And wisdom: can it be that you sit here
To countenance a wicked farce like this?
When some obscure and trembling slave is dragged 40
From sufferings which might shake the sternest heart
And bade to answer, not as he believes,
But as those may suspect or do desire
Whose questions thence suggest their own reply:
And that in peril of such hideous torments 45
As merciful God spares even the damned. Speak now
The thing you surely know, which is that you,
If your fine frame were stretched upon that wheel,
And you were told: "Confess that you did poison
Your little nephew; that fair blue-eyed child 50
Who was the loadstar of your life:"—and though
All see, since his most swift and piteous death,
That day and night, and heaven and earth, and time,
And all the things hoped for or done therein
Are changed to you, through your exceeding grief, 55
Yet you would say, "I confess any thing:"
And beg from your tormentors, like that slave,
The refuge of dishonourable death.
I pray thee, Cardinal, that thou assert
My innocence.

CAMILLO (*much moved*).

What shall we think, my Lords? 60

Shame on these tears! I thought the heart was frozen
Which is their fountain. I would pledge my soul
That she is guiltless.

JUDGE.

Yet she must be tortured.

CAMILLO.

I would as soon have tortured mine own nephew
(If he now lived he would be just her age; 65
His hair, too, was her colour, and his eyes
Like her's in shape, but blue and not so deep)
As that most perfect image of God's love
That ever came sorrowing upon the earth.
She is as pure as speechless infancy! 70

JUDGE.

Well, be her purity on your head, my Lord,
If you forbid the rack. His Holiness
Enjoined us to pursue this monstrous crime
By the severest forms of law; nay even
To stretch a point against the criminals. 75
The prisoners stand accused of parricide
Upon such evidence as justifies
Torture.

BEATRICE.

What evidence? This man's?

JUDGE.

Even so.

BEATRICE (*to MARZIO*).

Come near. And who art thou thus chosen forth
Out of the multitude of living men
To kill the innocent?

MARZIO.

I am Marzio, 80

Thy father's vassal.

BEATRICE.

Fix thine eyes on mine;
Answer to what I ask. (*turning to the Judges*)
I prithee mark
His countenance: unlike bold calumny
Which sometimes dares not speak the thing it looks,
He dares not look the thing he speaks, but bends 85
His gaze on the blind earth.

(*to MARZIO*) What! wilt thou say
That I did murder my own father?

MARZIO.

Oh!

Spare me! My brain swims round... I cannot speak...
It was that horrid torture forced the truth.
Take me away! Let her not look on me! 90
I am a guilty miserable wretch;
I have said all I know; now, let me die!

BEATRICE.

My Lords, if by my nature I had been
So stern, as to have planned the crime alleged,
Which your suspicions dictate to this slave, 95
And the rack makes him utter, do you think
I should have left this two-edged instrument
Of my misdeed; this man, this bloody knife
With my own name engraven on the hilt, 100
Lying unsheathed amid a world of foes,
For my own death? That with such horrible need
For deepest silence, I should have neglected
So trivial a precaution, as the making
His tomb the keeper of a secret written 105
On a thief's memory? What is his poor life?
What are a thousand lives? A parricide
Had trampled them like dust; and, see, he lives!
(*turning to MARZIO*) And thou...

MARZIO.

Oh, spare me! Speak to me no more!
That stern yet piteous look, those solemn tones, 110
Wound worse than torture.
(*to the Judges*) I have told it all;
For pity's sake lead me away to death.

CAMILLO.

Guards, lead him nearer the Lady Beatrice,
He shrinks from her regard like autumn's leaf
From the keen breath of the serenest north. 115

BEATRICE.

Oh, thou who tremblest on the giddy verge
Of life and death, pause ere thou answerest me;
So mayst thou answer God with less dismay:
What evil have we done thee? I, alas!
Have lived but on this earth a few sad years 120

And so my lot was ordered, that a father
First turned the moments of awakening life
To drops, each poisoning youth's sweet hope; and then
Stabbed with one blow my everlasting soul;
And my untainted fame; and even that peace 125
Which sleeps within the core of the heart's heart;
But the wound was not mortal; so my hate
Became the only worship I could lift
To our great father, who in pity and love,
Armed thee, as thou dost say, to cut him off; 130
And thus his wrong becomes my accusation;
And art thou the accuser? If thou hopest
Mercy in heaven, shew justice upon earth:
Worse than a bloody hand is a hard heart.
If thou hast done murders, made thy life's path 135
Over the trampled laws of God and man,
Rush not before thy Judge, and say: "My maker,
"I have done this and more; for there was one
"Who was most pure and innocent on earth;
"And because she endured what never any 140
"Guilty or innocent endured before:
"Because her wrongs could not be told, not thought;
"Because thy hand at length did rescue her;
"I with my words killed her and all her kin."
Think, I adjure you, what it is to slay 145
The reverence living in the minds of men
Towards our ancient house, and stainless fame!
Think what it is to strangle infant pity,
Cradled in the belief of guileless looks,
Till it become a crime to suffer. Think 150
What 'tis to blot with infamy and blood
All that which shews like innocence, and is,
Hear me, great God! I swear, most innocent,
So that the world lose all discrimination
Between the sly, fierce, wild regard of guilt, 155
And that which now compels thee to reply
To what I ask: Am I, or am I not
A parricide?

MARZIO.

Thou art not!

JUDGE.

What is this?

MARZIO.

I here declare those whom I did accuse
Are innocent. 'Tis I alone am guilty.

160

JUDGE.

Drag him away to torments; let them be
Subtle and long drawn out, to tear the folds
Of the heart's inmost cell. Unbind him not
Till he confess.

MARZIO.

Torture me as ye will:

A keener pain has wrung a higher truth
From my last breath. She is most innocent!
Bloodhounds, not men, glut yourselves well with me;
I will not give you that fine piece of nature
To rend and ruin. (*Exit MARZIO, guarded.*)

165

CAMILLO.

What say ye now, my Lords?

JUDGE.

Let tortures strain the truth till it be white
As snow thrice sifted by the frozen wind.

170

CAMILLO.

Yet stained with blood.

JUDGE (*to BEATRICE*).

Know you this paper, Lady?

BEATRICE.

Entrap me not with questions. Who stands here
As my accuser? Ha! wilt thou be he,
Who art my judge? Accuser, witness, judge,
What, all in one? Here is Orsino's name;
Where is Orsino? Let his eye meet mine.
What means this scrawl? Alas! Ye know not what,
And therefore on the chance that it may be
Some evil, will ye kill us?

175

Enter an Officer.

OFFICER.

Marzio's dead.

180

JUDGE.

What could he say?

OFFICER.

Nothing. As soon as we
Had bound him on the wheel, he smiled on us,
As one who baffles a deep adversary;
And holding his breath, died.

JUDGE.

There remains nothing
But to apply the question to those prisoners, 185
Who yet remain stubborn.

CAMILLO.

I overrule
Further proceedings, and in the behalf
Of these most innocent and noble persons
Will use my interest with the Holy Father.

JUDGE.

Let the Pope's pleasure then be done. Meanwhile 190
Conduct these culprits each to separate cells;
And be the engines ready: for this night
If the Pope's resolution be as grave,
Pious, and just as once, I'll wring the truth
Out of those nerves and sinews, groan by groan. 195
(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE III.

THE CELL OF A PRISON. BEATRICE IS DISCOVERED ASLEEP ON A
COUCH; ENTER BERNARDO.

BERNARDO.

How gently slumber rests upon her face,
Like the last thoughts of some day sweetly spent
Closing in night and dreams, and so prolonged.
After such torments as she bore last night,
How light and soft her breathing comes. Ay, me! 5
Methinks that I shall never sleep again.
But I must shake the heavenly dew of rest
From this sweet folded flower, thus... wake! awake!
What, sister, canst thou sleep?

BEATRICE (*awaking*).

I was just dreaming
That we were all in Paradise. Thou knowest 10
This cell seems like a kind of Paradise
After our father's presence.

BERNARDO.

Dear, dear sister,
Would that thy dream were not a dream! O, God!
How shall I tell?

BEATRICE.

What wouldst thou tell, sweet brother?

BERNARDO.

Look not so calm and happy, or even whilst 15
I stand considering what I have to say
My heart will break.

BEATRICE.

See now, thou mak'st me weep:
How very friendless thou wouldst be, dear child,
If I were dead. Say what thou hast to say.

BERNARDO.

They have confessed; they could endure no more 20
The tortures. . .

BEATRICE.

Ha! What was there to confess?
They must have told some weak and wicked lie
To flatter their tormentors. Have they said
That they were guilty? O, white innocence,
That thou shouldst wear the mask of guilt to hide 25
Thine awful and serenest countenance
From those who know thee not!

Enter JUDGE with LUCRETIA and GIACOMO, guarded.

Ignoble hearts!
For some brief spasms of pain, which are at least
As mortal as the limbs through which they pass,
Are centuries of high splendour laid in dust? 30
And that eternal honour which should live
Sunlike, above the reek of mortal fame,
Changed to a mockery and a bye-word? What!
Will you give up these bodies to be dragged

At horses' heels, so that our hair should sweep 35
The footsteps of the vain and senseless crowd,
Who, that they may make our calamity
Their worship and their spectacle, will leave
The churches and the theatres as void
As their own hearts? Shall the light multitude 40
Fling, at their choice, curses or faded pity,
Sad funeral flowers to deck a living corpse,
Upon us as we pass to pass away,
And leave. . . what memory of our having been?
Infamy, blood, terror, despair? O thou, 45
Who wert a mother to the parentless,
Kill not thy child! Let not her wrongs kill thee!
Brother, lie down with me upon the rack,
And let us each be silent as a corpse;
It soon will be as soft as any grave. 50
'Tis but the falsehood it can wring from fear
Makes the rack cruel.

GIACOMO.

They will tear the truth
Even from thee at last, those cruel pains:
For pity's sake say thou art guilty now.

LUCRETIA.

O, speak the truth! Let us all quickly die; 55
And after death, God is our judge, not they;
He will have mercy on us.

BERNARDO.

If indeed
It can be true, say so, dear sister mine;
And then the Pope will surely pardon you,
And all be well.

JUDGE.

Confess, or I will warp 60
Your limbs with such keen tortures. . .

BEATRICE.

Tortures! Turn
The rack henceforth into a spinning wheel!
Torture your dog, that he may tell when last
He lapped the blood his master shed . . . not me!

My pangs are of the mind, and of the heart, 65
And of the soul; aye, of the inmost soul,
Which weeps within tears as of burning gall
To see, in this ill world where none are true,
My kindred false to their deserted selves.
And with considering all the wretched life 70
Which I have lived, and its now wretched end,
And the small justice shewn by Heaven and Earth
To me or mine; and what a tyrant thou art,
And what slaves these; and what a world we make,
The oppressor and the oppressed . . . such pangs compel 75
My answer. What is it thou wouldst with me?

JUDGE.

Art thou not guilty of thy father's death?

BEATRICE.

Or wilt thou rather tax high judging God
That he permitted such an act as that
Which I have suffered, and which he beheld; 80
Made it unutterable, and took from it
All refuge, all revenge, all consequence,
But that which thou hast called my father's death?
Which is or is not what men call a crime,
Which either I have done, or have not done; 85
Say what ye will. I shall deny no more.
If ye desire it thus, thus let it be,
And so an end of all. Now do your will;
No other pains shall force another word.

JUDGE.

She is convicted, but has not confessed. 90
Be it enough. Until their final sentence
Let none have converse with them. You, young Lord,
Linger not here!

BEATRICE.

O, tear him not away!

JUDGE.

Guards do your duty.

BERNARDO (*Embracing BEATRICE*).

Oh! would ye divide

Body from soul?

OFFICER.

That is the headsman's business. 95

(Exeunt all but LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, *and* GIACOMO.)

GIACOMO.

Have I confessed? Is it all over now?

No hope! No refuge! O, weak, wicked tongue
Which hast destroyed me would that thou hadst been
Cut out and thrown to dogs first! To have killed
My father first, and then betrayed my sister; 100
Aye, thee! the one thing innocent and pure
In this black guilty world, to that which I
So well deserve! My wife! my little ones!
Destitute, helpless, and I... Father! God!
Canst thou forgive even the unforgiving, 105
When their full hearts break thus, thus!..

(Covers his face and weeps)

LUCRETIA.

O, my child!

To what a dreadful end are we all come!
Why did I yield? Why did I not sustain
Those torments? Oh, that I were all dissolved
Into these fast and unavailing tears, 110
Which flow and feel not!

BEATRICE.

What 'twas weak to do,

'Tis weaker to lament, once being done;
Take cheer! The God who knew my wrong, and made
Our speedy act the angel of his wrath,
Seems, and but seems to have abandoned us. 115
Let us not think that we shall die for this.
Brother, sit near me; give me your firm hand,
You had a manly heart. Bear up! Bear up!
O, dearest Lady, put your gentle head
Upon my lap, and try to sleep awhile: 120
Your eyes look pale, hollow and overworn,
With heaviness of watching and slow grief.
Come, I will sing you some low, sleepy tune,
Not cheerful, nor yet sad; some dull old thing,
Some outworn and unused monotony, 125
Such as our country gossips sing and spin,

Till they almost forget they live: lie down!
So, that will do. Have I forgot the words?
Faith! They are sadder than I thought they were.

SONG.

False friend, wilt thou smile or weep 130
When my life is laid asleep?
Little cares for a smile or a tear,
The clay-cold corpse upon the bier!
Farewell! Heigho!
What is this whispers low? 135
There is a snake in thy smile, my dear;
And bitter poison within thy tear.

Sweet sleep, were death like to thee,
Or if thou couldst mortal be,
I would close these eyes of pain; 140
When to wake? Never again.
O, World! Farewell!
Listen to the passing bell!
It says, thou and I must part,
With a light and a heavy heart. (*The scene closes.*) 145

SCENE IV.

A HALL OF THE PRISON. ENTER CAMILLO AND BERNARDO.

CAMILLO.

The Pope is stern; not to be moved or bent.
He looked as calm and keen as is the engine
Which tortures and which kills, exempt itself
From aught that it inflicts; a marble form,
A rite, a law, a custom: not a man. 5
He frowned, as if to frown had been the trick
Of his machinery, on the advocates
Presenting the defences, which he tore
And threw behind, muttering with hoarse, harsh voice:
"Which among ye defended their old father 10

"Killed in his sleep?" Then to another: "Thou
"Dost this in virtue of thy place; 'tis well."
He turned to me then, looking deprecation,
And said these three words, coldly: "They must die."

BERNARDO.

And yet you left him not?

CAMILLO.

I urged him still; 15
Pleading, as I could guess, the devilish wrong
Which prompted your unnatural parent's death.
And he replied: "Paolo Santa Croce
"Murdered his mother yester evening,
"And he is fled. Parricide grows so rife
"That soon, for some just cause no doubt, the young 20
"Will strangle us all, dozing in our chairs.
"Authority, and power, and hoary hair
"Are grown crimes capital. You are my nephew,
"You come to ask their pardon; stay a moment; 25
"Here is their sentence; never see me more
"Till, to the letter, it be all fulfilled."

BERNARDO.

O, God, not so! I did believe indeed
That all you said was but sad preparation
For happy news. O, there are words and looks 30
To bend the sternest purpose! Once I knew them,
Now I forget them at my dearest need.
What think you if I seek him out, and bathe
His feet and robe with hot and bitter tears?
Importune him with prayers, vexing his brain 35
With my perpetual cries, until in rage
He strike me with his pastoral cross, and trample
Upon my prostrate head, so that my blood
May stain the senseless dust on which he treads,
And remorse waken mercy? I will do it! 40
O, wait till I return! (*rushes out.*)

CAMILLO.

Alas! poor boy!

A wreck-devoted seaman thus might pray
To the deaf sea.

Enter LUCRETIA, BEATRICE and GIACOMO, guarded.

BEATRICE.

I hardly dare to fear
That thou bring'st other news than a just pardon.

CAMILLO.

May God in heaven be less inexorable 45
To the Pope's prayers, than he has been to mine.
Here is the sentence and the warrant.

BEATRICE (*wildly*).

Oh,

My God! Can it be possible I have
To die so suddenly? So young to go
Under the obscure, cold, rotting, wormy ground! 50
To be nailed down into a narrow place;
To see no more sweet sunshine; hear no more
Blithe voice of living thing; muse not again
Upon familiar thoughts, sad, yet thus lost—
How fearful! to be nothing! Or to be. . . 55
What? O, where am I? Let me not go mad!
Sweet Heaven, forgive weak thoughts! If there should be
No God, no Heaven, no Earth in the void world;
The wide, grey, lampless, deep, unpeopled world!
If all things then should be. . . my father's spirit, 60
His eye, his voice, his touch surrounding me;
The atmosphere and breath of my dead life!
If sometimes, as a shape more like himself,
Even the form which tortured me on earth,
Masked in grey hairs and wrinkles, he should come 65
And wind me in his hellish arms, and fix
His eyes on mine, and drag me down, down, down!
For was he not alone omnipotent
On Earth, and ever present? Even tho' dead,
Does not his spirit live in all that breathe, 70
And work for me and mine still the same ruin,
Scorn, pain, despair? Who ever yet returned
To teach the laws of death's untrodden realm?
Unjust perhaps as those which drive us now,
O, whither, whither?

LUCRETIA.

Trust in God's sweet love, 75
The tender promises of Christ: ere night,

Think we shall be in Paradise.

BEATRICE.

'Tis past!

Whatever comes my heart shall sink no more.
And yet, I know not why, your words strike chill :
How tedious, false and cold seem all things. I 80
Have met with much injustice in this world;
No difference has been made by God or man,
Or any power moulding my wretched lot,
'Twixt good or evil, as regarded me.
I am cut off from the only world I know, 85
From light, and life, and love, in youth's sweet prime.
You do well telling me to trust in God,
I hope I do trust in him. In whom else
Can any trust? And yet my heart is cold.

(During the latter speeches GIACOMO has retired conversing with CAMILLO, who now goes out; GIACOMO advances.)

GIACOMO.

Know you not, Mother . . . Sister, know you not? 90
Bernardo even now is gone to implore
The Pope to grant our pardon.

LUCRETIA.

Child, perhaps

It will be granted. We may all then live
To make these woes a tale for distant years:
O, what a thought! It gushes to my heart 95
Like the warm blood.

BEATRICE.

Yet both will soon be cold.

O, trample out that thought! Worse than despair,
Worse than the bitterness of death, is hope :
It is the only ill which can find place
Upon the giddy, sharp and narrow hour 100
Tottering beneath us. Plead with the swift frost
That it should spare the eldest flower of spring:
Plead with awakening earthquake, o'er whose couch
Even now a city stands, strong, fair and free;
Now stench and blackness yawn, like death. O, plead 105
With famine, or wind-walking Pestilence,

Blind lightning, or the deaf sea, not with man!
Cruel, cold, formal man; righteous in words,
In deeds a Cain. No, Mother, we must die:
Since such is the reward of innocent lives; 110
Such the alleviation of worst wrongs.
And whilst our murderers live, and hard, cold men,
Smiling and slow, walk thro' a world of tears
To death as to life's sleep; 'twere just the grave
Were some strange joy for us. Come, obscure Death, 115
And wind me in thine all-embracing arms!
Like a fond mother hide me in thy bosom,
And rock me to the sleep from which none wake.
Live ye, who live, subject to one another
As we were once, who now...

BERNARDO *rushes in.*

BERNARDO.

Oh, horrible! 120
That tears, that looks, that hope poured forth in prayer,
Even till the heart is vacant and despairs,
Should all be vain! The ministers of death
Are waiting round the doors. I thought I saw
Blood on the face of one... what if 'twere fancy? 125
Soon the heart's blood of all I love on earth
Will sprinkle him, and he will wipe it off
As if 'twere only rain. O, life! O, world!
Cover me! let me be no more! To see
That perfect mirror of pure innocence 130
Wherein I gazed, and grew happy and good,
Shivered to dust! To see thee, Beatrice,
Who made all lovely thou didst look upon...
Thee, light of life... dead, dark! while I say, sister,
To hear I have no sister; and thou, Mother, 135
Whose love was as a bond to all our loves...
Dead! The sweet bond broken!

Enter CAMILLO and Guards.

They come! Let me
Kiss those warm lips before their crimson leaves
Are blighted... white... cold. Say farewell, before
Death chokes that gentle voice! O, let me hear 140
You speak!

BEATRICE.

Farewell, my tender brother. Think
Of our sad fate with gentleness, as now:
And let mild, pitying thoughts lighten for thee
Thy sorrow's load. Err not in harsh despair,
But tears and patience. One thing more, my child, 145
For thine own sake be constant to the love
Thou bearest us; and to the faith that I,
Tho' wrapt in a strange cloud of crime and shame,
Lived ever holy and unstained. And tho'
Ill tongues shall wound me, and our common name 150
Be as a mark stamped on thine innocent brow
For men to point at as they pass, do thou
Forbear, and never think a thought unkind
Of those, who perhaps love thee in their graves.
So mayest thou die as I do; fear and pain 155
Being subdued. Farewell! Farewell! Farewell!

BERNARDO.

I cannot say, farewell!

CAMILLO.

O, Lady Beatrice!

BEATRICE.

Give yourself no unnecessary pain,
My dear Lord Cardinal. Here, Mother, tie
My girdle for me, and bind up this hair 160
In any simple knot; aye, that does well.
And yours I see is coming down. How often
Have we done this for one another; now
We shall not do it any more. My Lord,
We are quite ready. Well, 'tis very well. 165

THE END.

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND :

A LYRICAL DRAMA

IN FOUR ACTS;

WITH OTHER POEMS.


AUDISNE HÆC AMPHIARÆE, SUB TERRAM ABDITE?

PREFACE.

THE Greek tragic writers, in selecting as their subject any portion of their national history or mythology, employed in their treatment of it a certain arbitrary discretion. They by no means conceived themselves bound to adhere to the common interpretation or to imitate in story as in title their rivals and predecessors. Such a system would have amounted to a resignation of those claims to preference over their competitors which incited the composition. The Agamemnonian story was exhibited on the Athenian theatre with as many variations as dramas.

I have presumed to employ a similar licence. The "Prometheus Unbound" of Æschylus supposed the reconciliation of Jupiter with his victim as the price of the disclosure of the danger threatened to his empire by the consummation of his marriage with Thetis. Thetis, according to this view of the subject, was given in marriage to Peleus, and Prometheus, by the permission of Jupiter, delivered from his captivity by Hercules. Had I framed my story on this model, I should have done no more than have attempted to restore the lost drama of Æschylus; an ambition, which, if my preference to this mode of treating the subject had incited me to cherish, the recollection of the high comparison such an attempt would challenge might

well abate. But, in truth, I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind. The moral interest of the fable, which is so powerfully sustained by the sufferings and endurance of Prometheus, would be annihilated if we could conceive of him as unsaying his high language and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary. The only imaginary being resembling in any degree Prometheus, is Satan; and Prometheus is, in my judgement, a more poetical character than Satan, because, in addition to courage, and majesty, and firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, he is susceptible of being described as exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandisement, which, in the Hero of Paradise Lost, interfere with the interest. The character of Satan engenders in the mind a pernicious casuistry which leads us to weigh his faults with his wrongs, and to excuse the former because the latter exceed all measure. In the minds of those who consider that magnificent fiction with a religious feeling it engenders something worse. But Prometheus is, as it were, the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends.

This Poem was chiefly written upon  mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, among the flowery glades, and thickets of odoriferous blossoming trees, which are extended in ever winding labyrinths upon its immense platforms and dizzy arches suspended in the air. The bright blue sky of Rome, and the effect of the vigorous awakening spring in that divinest climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication, were the inspiration of this drama.

The imagery which I have employed will be found, in many instances, to have been drawn from the operations of the human mind, or from those external actions by which they are expressed. This is unusual in modern poetry, although Dante and Shakspeare are full of instances of the same kind: Dante indeed more than any other poet, and with greater success. But the Greek

poets, as writers to whom no resource of awakening the sympathy of their contemporaries was unknown, were in the habitual use of this power; and it is the study of their works, (since a higher merit would probably be denied me,) to which I am willing that my readers should impute this singularity.

One word is due in candour to the degree in which the study of contemporary writings may have tinged my composition, for such has been a topic of censure with regard to poems far more popular, and indeed more deservedly popular, than mine. It is impossible that any one who inhabits the same age with such writers as those who stand in the foremost ranks of our own, can conscientiously assure himself that his language and tone of thought may not have been modified by the study of the productions of those extraordinary intellects. It is true, that, not the spirit of their genius, but the forms in which it has manifested itself, are due less to the peculiarities of their own minds than to the peculiarity of the moral and intellectual condition of the minds among which they have been produced. Thus a number of writers possess the form, whilst they want the spirit of those whom, it is alleged, they imitate; because the former is the endowment of the age in which they live, and the latter must be the uncommunicated lightning of their own mind.

The peculiar style of intense and comprehensive imagery which distinguishes the modern literature of England, has not been, as a general power, the product of the imitation of any particular writer. The mass of capabilities remains at every period materially the same; the circumstances which awaken it to action perpetually change. If England were divided into forty republics, each equal in population and extent to Athens, there is no reason to suppose but that, under institutions not more perfect than those of Athens, each would produce philosophers and poets equal to those who (if we except Shakspeare) have never been surpassed. We owe the great writers of the golden age of our literature to that fervid awakening of the public mind which shook to dust the oldest and most oppressive form of the Christian religion. We owe Milton to the progress and

developement of the same spirit: the sacred Milton was, let it ever be remembered, a republican, and a bold inquirer into morals and religion. The great writers of our own age are, we have reason to suppose, the companions and fore-runners of some unimagined change in our social condition or the opinions which cement it. The cloud of mind is discharging its collected lightning, and the equilibrium between institutions and opinions is now restoring, or is about to be restored.

As to imitation, poetry is a mimetic art. It creates, but it creates by combination and representation. Poetical abstractions are beautiful and new, not because the portions of which they are composed had no previous existence in the mind of man or in nature, but because the whole produced by their combination has some intelligible and beautiful analogy with those sources of emotion and thought, and with the contemporary condition of them: one great poet is a masterpiece of nature which another not only ought to study but must study. He might as wisely and as easily determine that his mind should no longer be the mirror of all that is lovely in the visible universe, as exclude from his contemplation the beautiful which exists in the writings of a great contemporary. The pretence of doing it would be a presumption in any but the greatest; the effect, even in him, would be strained, unnatural, and ineffectual. A poet is the combined product of such internal powers as modify the nature of others; and of such external influences as excite and sustain these powers; he is not one, but both. Every man's mind is, in this respect, modified by all the objects of nature and art; by every word and every suggestion which he ever admitted to act upon his consciousness; it is the mirror upon which all forms are reflected, and in which they compose one form. Poets, not otherwise than philosophers, painters, sculptors, and musicians, are, in one sense, the creators, and, in another, the creations, of their age. From this subjection the loftiest do not escape. There is a similarity between Homer and Hesiod, between Æschylus and Euripides, between Virgil and Horace, between Dante and Petrarch, between Shakspeare and Fletcher, between Dryden and Pope; each has a generic resemblance under

which their specific distinctions are arranged. If this similarity be the result of imitation, I am willing to confess that I have imitated.

Let this opportunity be conceded to me of acknowledging that I have, what a Scotch philosopher characteristically terms, "a passion for reforming the world:" what passion incited him to write and publish his book, he omits to explain. For my part I had rather be damned with Plato and Lord Bacon, than go to Heaven with Paley and Malthus. But it is a mistake to suppose that I dedicate my poetical compositions solely to the direct enforcement of reform, or that I consider them in any degree as containing a reasoned system on the theory of human life. Didactic poetry is my abhorrence; nothing can be equally well expressed in prose that is not tedious and supererogatory in verse. My purpose has hitherto been simply to familiarize the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence; aware that until the mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust, although they would bear the harvest of his happiness. Should I live to accomplish what I purpose, that is, produce a systematical history of what appear to me to be the genuine elements of human society, let not the advocates of injustice and superstition flatter themselves that I should take *Æschylus* rather than Plato as my model.

The having spoken of myself with unaffected freedom will need little apology with the candid; and let the uncandid consider that they injure me less than their own hearts and minds by misrepresentation. Whatever talents a person may possess to amuse and instruct others, be they ever so inconsiderable, he is yet bound to exert them: if his attempt be ineffectual, let the punishment of an unaccomplished purpose have been sufficient; let none trouble themselves to heap the dust of oblivion upon his efforts; the pile they raise will betray his grave which might otherwise have been unknown.

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

PROMETHEUS.	ASIA	} Oceanides.
DEMOGORGON.	PANTHEA	
JUPITER.	IONE	
THE EARTH.	THE PHANTASM OF JUPITER.	
OCEAN.	THE SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.	
APOLLO.	THE SPIRIT OF THE MOON.	
MERCURY.	SPIRITS OF THE HOURS.	
HERCULES.	SPIRITS. ECHOES. FAUNS. FURIES.	

ACT I.

SCENE, A RAVINE OF ICY ROCKS IN THE INDIAN CAUCASUS.
PROMETHEUS IS DISCOVERED BOUND TO THE PRECIPICE.
PANTHEA AND IONE ARE SEATED AT HIS FEET. TIM
NIGHT. DURING THE SCENE, MORNING SLOWLY BREAKS. 75

PROMETHEUS.

MONARCH of Gods and Dæmons, and all Spirits
But One, who throng those bright and rolling worlds
Which Thou and I alone of living things
Behold with sleepless eyes! regard this Earth
Made multitudinous with thy slaves, whom thou 5
Requiest for knee-worship, prayer, and praise,
And toil, and hecatombs of broken hearts,
With fear and self-contempt and barren hope.
Whilst me, who am thy foe, eyeless in hate,
Hast thou made reign and triumph, to thy scorn 10
O'er mine own misery and thy vain revenge.
Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours,
And moments aye divided by keen pangs

Till they seemed years, torture and solitude,
Scorn and despair,—these are mine empire. 15
More glorious far than that which thou surveyest
From thine unenvied throne, O, Mighty God!
Almighty, had I deigned to share the shame
Of thine ill tyranny, and hung not here
Nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain, 20
Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured; without herb,
Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life.
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever!

No change, no pause, no hope! Yet I endure.
I ask the Earth, have not the mountains felt? 25
I ask yon Heaven, the all-beholding Sun,
Has it not seen? The Sea, in storm or calm,
Heaven's ever-changing Shadow, spread below,
Have its deaf waves not heard my agony?
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever! 30

The crawling glaciers pierce me with the spears
Of their moon-freezing crystals, the bright chains
Eat with their burning cold into my bones.
Heaven's winged hound, polluting from thy lips
His beak in poison not his own, tears up 35
ap] My heart; and shapeless sights come wandering by,
l' The ghastly people of the realm of dream,
Mocking me: and the Earthquake-fends are charged
To wrench the rivets from my quivering wounds
When the rocks split and close again behind: 40
While from their loud abysses howling throng
The genii of the storm, urging the rage
Of whirlwind, and afflict me with keen hail.
And yet to me welcome is day and night,
Whether one breaks the hoar frost of the morn, 45
Or starry, dim, and slow, the other climbs
The leaden-coloured east; for then they lead
The wingless, crawling hours, one among whom
—As some dark Priest hales the reluctant victim—
Shall drag thee, cruel King, to kiss the blood 50
From these pale feet, which then might trample thee

If they disdained not such a prostrate slave.
Disdain! Ah no! I pity thee. What ruin
Will hunt thee undefended thro' the wide Heaven!
How will thy soul, cloven to its depth with terror, 55
Gape like a hell within! I speak in grief,
Not exultation, for I hate no more,
As then ere misery made me wise. The curse
Once breathed on thee I would recall. Ye Mountains,
Whose many-voicèd Echoes, thro' the mist 60
Of cataracts, flung the thunder of that spell!
Ye icy Springs, stagnant with wrinkling frost,
Which vibrated to hear me, and then crept
Shuddering thro' India! Thou serenest Air,
Thro' which the Sun walks burning without beams! 65
And ye swift Whirlwinds, who on poisèd wings
Hung mute and moveless o'er you hushed abyss,
As thunder, louder than your own, made rock
The orbèd world! If then my words had power,
Though I am changed so that aught evil wish 70
Is dead within; although no memory be
Of what is hate, let them not lose it now!
What was that curse? for ye all heard me speak.

FIRST VOICE: FROM THE MOUNTAINS.

Thrice three hundred thousand years
O'er the Earthquake's couch we stood: 75
Oft, as men convulsed with fears,
We trembled in our multitude.

SECOND VOICE: FROM THE SPRINGS.

Thunder-bolts had parched our water,
We had been stained with bitter blood,
And had run mute, 'mid shrieks of slaughter, 80
Thro' a city and a solitude.

THIRD VOICE: FROM THE AIR.

I had clothed, since Earth uprose,
Its wastes in colours not their own,
And oft had my serene repose
Been cloven by many a rending groan. 85

FOURTH VOICE: FROM THE WHIRLWINDS.

We had soared beneath these mountains
Unresting ages; nor had thunder,

Nor yon volcano's flaming fountains,
Nor any power above or under
Ever made us mute with wonder.

90

FIRST VOICE.

But never bowed our snowy crest
As at the voice of thine unrest.

SECOND VOICE.

Never such a sound before
To the Indian waves we bore.
A pilot asleep on the howling sea
Leaped up from the deck in agony,
And heard, and cried, "Ah, woe is me!"
And died as mad as the wild waves be.

95

THIRD VOICE.

By such dread words from Earth to Heaven
My still realm was never riven:
When its wound was closed, there stood
Darkness o'er the day like blood.

100

FOURTH VOICE.

And we shrank back: for dreams of ruin
To frozen caves our flight pursuing
Made us keep silence—thus—and thus—
Though silence is a hell to us.

105

THE EARTH.

The tongueless Caverns of the craggy hills
Cried, 'Misery!' then; the hollow Heaven replied,
'Misery!' And the Ocean's purple waves,
Climbing the land, howled to the lashing winds,
And the pale nations heard it, 'Misery!'

110

PROMETHEUS.

I hear a sound of voices: not the voice
Which I gave forth. Mother, thy sons and thou
Scorn him, without whose all-enduring will
Beneath the fierce omnipotence of Jove,
Both they and thou had vanished, like thin mist
Unrolled on the morning wind. Know ye not me,
The Titan? He who made his agony
The barrier to your else all-conquering foe?
Oh, rock-embosomed lawns, and snow-fed streams,

115

120

Now seen athwart frore vapours, deep below,
Thro' whose o'ershadowing woods I wandered once
With Asia, drinking life from her loved eyes;
Why scorns the spirit which informs ye, now
To commune with me? me alone, who checked, 125
As one who checks a fiend-drawn charioteer,
The falsehood and the force of him who reigns
Supreme, and with the groans of pining slaves
Fills your dim glens and liquid wildernesses:
Why answer ye not, still? Brethren!

THE EARTH.

They dare not. 130

PROMETHEUS.

Who dares? for I would hear that curse again.
Ha, what an awful whisper rises up!
'Tis scarce like sound: it tingles thro' the frame
As lightning tingles, hovering ere it strike.
Speak, Spirit! from thine inorganic voice 135
I only know that thou art moving near
And love. How cursed I him?

THE EARTH.

How canst thou hear
Who knowest not the language of the dead?

PROMETHEUS.

Thou art a living spirit: ~~speaking as they~~

THE EARTH.

I dare not speak like life, lest Heaven's fell King 140
Should hear, and link me to some wheel of pain
More torturing than the one whereon I roll.
Subtle thou art and good, and tho' the Gods
Hear not this voice, yet thou art more than God
Being wise and kind: earnestly hearken now. 145

PROMETHEUS.

Obscurely thro' my brain, like shadows dim,
Sweep awful thoughts, rapid and thick. I feel
Faint, like one mingled in entwining love;
Yet 'tis not pleasure.

THE EARTH.

No, thou canst not hear:

But dare not speak them..

PROMETHEUS.

Venerable mother!

All else who live and suffer take from thee
Some comfort; flowers, and fruits, and happy sounds,
And love, though fleeting; these may not be mine.
But mine own words, I pray, deny me not.

190

THE EARTH.

They shall be told. Ere Babylon was dust,
The Magus Zoroaster, my dead child,
Met his own image walking in the garden.
That apparition, sole of men, he saw.
For know there are two worlds of life and death: 195
One that which thou beholdest; but the other
Is underneath the grave, where do inhabit
The shadows of all forms that think and live
Till death unite them and they part no more;
Dreams and the light imaginings of men, 200
And all that faith creates or love desires,
Terrible, strange, sublime and beauteous shapes.
There thou art, and dost hang, a writhing shade,
'Mid whirlwind-peopled mountains; all the gods
Are there, and all the powers of nameless worlds, 205
Vast, sceptred phantoms; heroes, men, and beasts;
And Demogorgon, a tremendous gloom;
And he, the supreme Tyrant, on his throne
Of burning gold. Son, one of these shall utter
The curse which all remember. Call at will 210
Thine own ghost, or the ghost of Jupiter,
Hades or Typhon, or what mightier Gods
From all-prolific Evil, since thy ruin
Have sprung, and trampled on my prostrate sons.
Ask, and they must reply: so the revenge 215
Of the Supreme may sweep thro' vacant shades,
As rainy wind thro' the abandoned gate
Of a fallen palace.

PROMETHEUS.

Mother, let not aught

Of that which may be evil, pass again
My lips, or those of aught resembling me.

220

Phantasm of Jupiter, arise, appear!

IONE.

My wings are folded o'er mine ears:

My wings are crossèd o'er mine eyes:

Yet thro' their silver shade appears,

And thro' their lulling plumes arise,

225

A Shape, a throng of sounds;

May it be no ill to thee

O thou of many wounds!

Near whom, for our sweet sister's sake,

Ever thus we watch and wake.

230

PANTHEA.

The sound is of whirlwind underground,

Earthquake, and fire, and mountains cloven;

The shape is awful like the sound,

Clothed in dark purple, star-inwoven.

A sceptre of pale gold

235

To stay steps proud, o'er the slow cloud

His veined hand doth hold.

Cruel he looks, but calm and strong,

Like one who does, not suffers wrong.

PHANTASM OF JUPITER.

Why have the secret powers of this strange world

240

Driven me, a frail and empty phantom, hither

On direst storms? What unaccustomed sounds

Are hovering on my lips, unlike the voice

With which our pallid race hold ghastly talk

In darkness? And, proud sufferer, who art thou?

245

PROMETHEUS.

Tremendous Image, as thou art must be

He whom thou shadowest forth. I am his foe,

The Titan. Speak the words which I would hear,

Although no thought inform thine empty voice.

THE EARTH.

Listen! And tho' your echoes must be mute,

250

Grey mountains, and old woods, and haunted springs,

Prophetic caves, and isle-surrounding streams,

Rejoice to hear what yet ye cannot speak.

PHANTASM.

A spirit seizes me and speaks within:

Trampling the slant winds on high
With golden-sandalled feet, that glow
Under plumes of purple dye,
Like rose-ensanguined ivory,

320

A Shape comes now,
Stretching on high from his right hand
A serpent-cinctured wand.

PANTHEA.

'Tis Jove's world-wandering herald, Mercury.

325

IONE.

And who are those with hydra tresses
And iron wings that climb the wind,
Whom the frowning God represses
Like vapours steaming up behind,
Clanging loud, an endless crowd—

330

PANTHEA.

These are Jove's tempest-walking hounds,
Whom he gluts with groans and blood,
When charioted on sulphurous cloud
He bursts Heaven's bounds.

IONE.

Are they now led, from the thin dead
On new pangs to be fed?

335

PANTHEA.

The Titan looks as ever, firm, not proud.

FIRST FURY.

Ha! I scent life!

SECOND FURY.

Let me but look into his eyes!

THIRD FURY.

The hope of torturing him smells like a heap
Of corpses, to a death-bird after battle.

340

FIRST FURY.

Darest thou delay, O Herald! take cheer, Hounds
Of Hell: what if the Son of Maia soon
Should make us food and sport—who can please long
The Omnipotent?

MERCURY.

Back to your towers of iron

And gnash, beside the streams of fire and wail, 345
Your foodless teeth. Geryon, arise! and Gorgon,
Chimæra, and thou Sphinx, subtlest of fiends
Who ministered to Thebes Heaven's poisoned wine,
Unnatural love, and more unnatural hate:
These shall perform your task.

FIRST FURY.

Oh, mercy! mercy! 350
We die with our desire: drive us not back!

MERCURY.

Crouch then in silence.

Awful Sufferer
To thee unwilling, most unwillingly
I come, by the great Father's will driven down,
To execute a doom of new revenge. 355
Alas! I pity thee, and hate myself
That I can do no more: aye from thy sight
Returning, for a season, Heaven seems Hell,
So thy worn form pursues me night and day,
Smiling reproach. Wise art thou, firm and good, 360
But vainly wouldst stand forth alone in strife
Against the Omnipotent; as yon clear lamps
That measure and divide the weary years
From which there is no refuge, long have taught
And long must teach. Even now thy Torturer arms 365
With the strange might of unimagined pains
The powers who scheme slow agonies in Hell,
And my commission is to lead them here,
Or what more subtle, foul, or savage fiends
People the abyss, and leave them to their task. 370
Be it not so! there is a secret known
To thee, and to none else of living things,
Which may transfer the sceptre of wide Heaven,
The fear of which perplexes the Supreme:
Clothe it in words, and bid it clasp his throne 375
In intercession; bend thy soul in prayer,
And like a suppliant in some gorgeous fane,
Let the will kneel within thy haughty heart:
For benefits and meek submission tame
The fiercest and the mightiest.

PROMETHEUS.

Evil minds.

380

Change good to their own nature. I gave all
He has; and in return he chains me here
Years, ages, night and day: whether the Sun
Split my parched skin, or in the moony night
The crystal-wingèd snow cling round my hair: 385
Whilst my belovèd race is trampled down
By his thought-executing ministers.
Such is the tyrant's recompense: 'tis just:
He who is evil can receive no good;
And for a world bestowed, or a friend lost, 390
He can feel hate, fear, shame; not gratitude:
He but requites me for his own misdeed.
Kindness to such is keen reproach, which breaks
With bitter stings the light sleep of Revenge.
Submission, thou dost know I cannot try: 395
For what submission but that fatal word,
The death-seal of mankind's captivity,
Like the Sicilian's hair-suspended sword,
Which trembles o'er his crown, would he accept,
Or could I yield? Which yet I will not yield. 400
Let others flatter Crime, where it sits throned
In brief Omnipotence: secure are they:
For Justice, when triumphant, will weep down
Pity, not punishment, on her own wrongs,
Too much avenged by those who err. I wait, 405
Enduring thus, the retributive hour
Which since we spake is even nearer now.
But hark, the hell-hounds clamour: fear delay:
Behold! Heaven lowers under thy Father's frown.

MERCURY.

Oh, that we might be spared: I to inflict 410
And thou to suffer! Once more answer me:
Thou knowest not the period of Jove's power?

PROMETHEUS.

I know but this, that it must come.

MERCURY.

Alas!

Thou canst not count thy years to come of pain?

PROMETHEUS.

They last while Jove must reign : nor more, nor less 415
Do I desire or fear.

MERCURY.

Yet pause, and plunge
Into Eternity, where recorded time,
Even all that we imagine, age on age,
Seems but a point, and the reluctant mind
Flags wearily in its unending flight, 420
Till it sink, dizzy, blind, lost, shelterless ;
Perchance it has not numbered the slow years
Which thou must spend in torture, unreprieved ?

PROMETHEUS.

Perchance no thought can count them, yet they pass.

MERCURY.

If thou might'st dwell among the Gods the while 425
Lapped in voluptuous joy ?

PROMETHEUS.

I would not quit
This bleak ravine, these unrepentant pains.

MERCURY.

Alas ! I wonder at, yet pity thee.

PROMETHEUS.

Pity the self-despising slaves of Heaven,
Not me, within whose mind sits peace serene, 430
As light in the sun, throned : how vain is talk !
Call up the fiends.

IONE.

O, sister, look ! White fire
Has cloven to the roots yon huge snow-loaded cedar ;
How fearfully God's thunder howls behind !

MERCURY.

I must obey his words and thine : alas ! 435
Most heavily remorse hangs at my heart !

PANTHEA.

See where the child of Heaven, with wingèd feet,
Runs down the slanted sunlight of the dawn.

IONE.

Dear sister, close thy plumes over thine eyes

Lest thou behold and die: they come: they come 440
Blackening the birth of day with countless wings,
And hollow underneath, like death.

FIRST FURY.

Prometheus!

SECOND FURY.

Immortal Titan!

THIRD FURY.

Champion of Heaven's slaves!

PROMETHEUS.

He whom some dreadful voice invokes is here,
Prometheus, the chained Titan. Horrible forms, 445
What and who are ye? Never yet there came
Phantasms so foul thro' monster-teeming Hell
From the all-miscreative brain of Jove;
Whilst I behold such execrable shapes,
Methinks I grow like what I contemplate, 450
And laugh and stare in loathsome sympathy.

FIRST FURY.

We are the ministers of pain, and fear,
And disappointment, and mistrust, and hate,
And clinging crime; and as lean dogs pursue
Thro' wood and lake some struck and sobbing fawn, 455
We track all things that weep, and bleed, and live,
When the great King betrays them to our will.

PROMETHEUS.

Oh! many fearful natures in one name,
I know ye; and these lakes and echoes know
The darkness and the clangour of your wings. 460
But why more hideous than your loathed selves
Gather ye up in legions from the deep?

SECOND FURY.

We knew not that: Sisters, rejoice, rejoice!

PROMETHEUS.

Can aught exult in its deformity?

SECOND FURY.

The beauty of delight makes lovers glad, 465
Gazing on one another: so are we.
As from the rose which the pale priestess kneels

To gather for her festal crown of flowers
The aërial crimson falls, flushing her cheek,
So from our victim's destined agony 470
The shade which is our form invests us round,
Else we are shapeless as our mother Night.

PROMETHEUS.

I laugh your power, and his who sent you here,
To lowest scorn. Pour forth the cup of pain.

FIRST FURY.

Thou thinkest we will rend thee bone from bone, 475
And nerve from nerve, working like fire within?

PROMETHEUS.

Pain is my element, as hate is thine;
Ye rend me now: I care not.

SECOND FURY.

Dost imagine
We will but laugh into thy lidless eyes?

PROMETHEUS.

I weigh not what ye do, but what ye suffer, 480
Being evil. Cruel was the power which called
You, or aught else so wretched, into light.

THIRD FURY.

Thou think'st we will live thro' thee, one by one,
Like animal life, and tho' we can obscure not
The soul which burns within, that we will dwell 485
Beside it, like a vain loud multitude
Vexing the self-content of wisest men:
That we will be dread thought beneath thy brain,
And foul desire round thine astonished heart,
And blood within thy labyrinthine veins 490
Crawling like agony.

PROMETHEUS.

Why, ye are thus now;
Yet am I king over myself, and rule
The torturing and conflicting throngs within,
As Jove rules you when Hell grows mutinous.

CHORUS OF FURIES.

From the ends of the earth, from the ends of the earth, 495

Where the night has its grave and the morning its birth,

Come, come, come!

Oh, ye who shake hills with the scream of your mirth,

When cities sink howling in ruin; and ye

Who with wingless footsteps trample the sea, 500

And close upon Shipwreck and Famine's track,

Sit chattering with joy on the foodless wreck;

Come, come, come!

Leave the bed, low, cold, and red,

Strewed beneath a nation dead; 505

Leave the hatred, as in ashes

Fire is left for future burning:

It will burst in bloodier flashes

When ye stir it, soon returning:

Leave the self-contempt implanted 510

In young spirits, sense-enchanted,

Misery's yet unkindled fuel:

Leave Hell's secrets half unchanted

To the maniac dreamer; cruel

More than ye can be with hate 515

Is he with fear.

Come, come, come!

We are steaming up from Hell's wide gate

And we burthen the blast of the atmosphere,

But vainly we toil till ye come here. 520

IONE.

Sister, I hear the thunder of new wings.

PANTHEA.

These solid mountains quiver with the sound

Even as the tremulous air: their shadows make

The space within my plumes more black than night.

FIRST FURY.

Your call was as a wingèd car 525

Driven on whirlwinds fast and far;

It rapt us from red gulphs of war.

SECOND FURY.

From wide cities, famine-wasted;

THIRD FURY.

Groans half heard, and blood untasted;

FOURTH FURY.

Kingly conclaves stern and cold, 530
Where blood with gold is bought and sold;

FIFTH FURY.

From the furnace, white and hot,
In which—

A FURY.

Speak not: whisper not:
I know all that ye would tell,
But to speak might break the spell 535
Which must bend the Invincible,
The stern of thought;
He yet defies the deepest power of Hell.

FURY.

Tear the veil!

ANOTHER FURY.

It is torn.

CHORUS.

The pale stars of the morn
Shine on a misery, dire to be borne. 540
Dost thou faint, mighty Titan? We laugh thee to scorn.
Dost thou boast the clear knowledge thou waken'dst for
man?

Then was kindled within him a thirst which outran
Those perishing waters; a thirst of fierce fever,
Hope, love, doubt, desire, which consume him for ever. 545

One came forth of gentle worth
Smiling on the sanguine earth;
His words outlived him, like swift poison
Withering up truth, peace, and pity.
Look! where round the wide horizon 550

Many a million-peopled city
Vomits smoke in the bright air.
Mark that outcry of despair!
'Tis his mild and gentle ghost

Wailing for the faith he kindled: 555
Look again, the flames almost

To a glow-worm's lamp have dwindled:
The survivors round the embers

Gather in dread.

Joy, joy, joy!

560

Past ages crowd on thee, but each one remembers,
And the future is dark, and the present is spread
Like a pillow of thorns for thy slumberless head.

SEMICHORUS I.

Drops of bloody agony flow
From his white and quivering brow.

565

Grant a little respite now:

See a disenchanted nation

Springs like day from desolation;

To Truth its state is dedicate,

And Freedom leads it forth, her mate;

570

A legioned band of linkèd brothers

Whom Love calls children—

SEMICHORUS II.

'Tis another's:

See how kindred murder kin:

'Tis the vintage-time for death and sin:

Blood, like new wine, bubbles within:

575

Till Despair smothers

The struggling world, which slaves and tyrants win.

[*All the FURIES vanish, except one.*

IONE.

Hark, sister! what a low yet dreadful groan

Quite unsuppressed is tearing up the heart

Of the good Titan, as storms tear the deep,

580

And beasts hear the sea moan in inland caves.

Darest thou observe how the fiends torture him?

PANTHEA.

Alas! I looked forth twice, but will no more.

IONE.

What didst thou see?

PANTHEA.

A woful sight: a youth

With patient looks nailed to a crucifix.

585

IONE.

What next?

PANTHEA.

The heaven around, the earth below

Was peopled with thick shapes of human death,
All horrible, and wrought by human hands,
And some appeared the work of human hearts,
For men were slowly killed by frowns and smiles: 590
And other sights too foul to speak and live
Were wandering by. Let us not tempt worse fear
By looking forth: those groans are grief enough.

FURY.

Behold an emblem: those who do endure
Deep wrongs for man, and scorn, and chains, but heap 595
Thousandfold torment on themselves and him.

PROMETHEUS.

Remit the anguish of that lighted stare;
Close those wan lips; let that thorn-wounded brow
Stream not with blood; it mingles with thy tears!
Fix, fix those tortured orbs in peace and death, 600
So thy sick throes shake not that crucifix,
So those pale fingers play not with thy gore.
O, horrible! Thy name I will not speak,
It hath become a curse. I see, I see
The wise, the mild, the lofty, and the just, 605
Whom thy slaves hate for being like to thee,
Some hunted by foul lies from their heart's home,
An early-chosen, late-lamented home;
As hooded ounces cling to the driven hind;
Some linked to corpses in unwholesome cells: 610
Some—Hear I not the multitude laugh loud?—
Impaled in lingering fire: and mighty realms
Float by my feet, like sea-uprooted isles,
Whose sons are kneaded down in common blood
By the red light of their own burning homes. 615

FURY.

Blood thou canst see, and fire; and canst hear groans;
Worse things, unheard, unseen, remain behind.

PROMETHEUS.

Worse?

FURY.

In each human heart terror survives
The ruin it has gorged: the loftiest fear
All that they would disdain to think were true: 620

Hypocrisy and custom make their minds
The fanes of many a worship, now outworn.
They dare not devise good for man's estate,
And yet they know not that they do not dare.
The good want power, but to weep barren tears. 625
The powerful goodness want: worse need for them.
The wise want love; and those who love want wisdom;
And all best things are thus confused to ill.
Many are strong and rich, and would be just,
But live among their suffering fellow-men 630
As if none felt: they know not what they do.

PROMETHEUS.

Thy words are like a cloud of wingèd snakes;
And yet I pity those they torture not.

FURY.

Thou pitiest them? I speak no more! [*Vanishes.*]

PROMETHEUS.

Ah woe!

Ah woe! Alas! pain, pain ever, for ever! 635
I close my tearless eyes, but see more clear
Thy works within my woe-illumèd mind,
Thou subtle tyrant! Peace is in the grave.
The grave hides all things beautiful and good:
I am a God and cannot find it there, 640
Nor would I seek it: for, though dread revenge,
This is defeat, fierce king, not victory.
The sights with which thou torturest gird my soul
With new endurance, till the hour arrives
When they shall be no types of things which are. 645

PANTHEA.

Alas! what sawest thou?

PROMETHEUS.

There are two woes;
To speak, and to behold; thou spare me one.
Names are there, Nature's sacred watch-words, they
Were borne aloft in bright emblazonry;
The nations thronged around, and cried aloud, 650
As with one voice, Truth, liberty, and love!
Suddenly fierce confusion fell from heaven

Among them: there was strife, deceit, and fear:
Tyrants rushed in, and did divide the spoil.
This was the shadow of the truth I saw.

655

THE EARTH.

I felt thy torture, son, with such mixed joy
As pain and virtue give. To cheer thy state
I bid ascend those subtle and fair spirits,
Whose homes are the dim caves of human thought,
And who inhabit, as birds wing the wind,
Its world-surrounding æther: they behold
Beyond that twilight realm, as in a glass,
The future: may they speak comfort to thee!

660

PANTHEA.

Look, sister, where a troop of spirits gather,
Like flocks of clouds in spring's delightful weather,
Thronging in the blue air!

665

IONE.

And see! more come,
Like fountain-vapours when the winds are dumb,
That climb up the ravine in scattered lines.
And, hark! is it the music of the pines?
Is it the lake? Is it the waterfall?

670

PANTHEA.

'Tis something sadder, sweeter far than all.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS.

From unremembered ages we
Gentle guides and guardians be
Of heaven-oppressed mortality;
And we breathe, and sicken not,
The atmosphere of human thought:
Be it dim, and dank, and grey,
Like a storm-extinguished day,
Travelled o'er by dying gleams;
Be it bright as all between
Cloudless skies and windless streams,
Silent, liquid, and serene;
As the birds within the wind,
As the fish within the wave,
As the thoughts of man's own mind
Float thro' all above the grave;

675

680

685

We make there our liquid lair,
Voyaging cloudlike and unpent
Thro' the boundless element:
Thence we bear the prophecy
Which begins and ends in thee!

690

IONE.

More yet come, one by one: the air around them
Looks radiant as the air around a star.

FIRST SPIRIT.

On a battle-trumpet's blast
I fled hither, fast, fast, fast,
'Mid the darkness upward cast.
From the dust of creeds outworn,
From the tyrant's banner torn,
Gathering 'round me, onward borne,
There was mingled many a cry—
Freedom! Hope! Death! Victory!
Till they faded thro' the sky;
And one sound, above, around,
One sound beneath, around, above,
Was moving; 'twas the soul of love;
'Twas the hope, the prophecy,
Which begins and ends in thee.

695

700

705

SECOND SPIRIT.

A rainbow's arch stood on the sea,
Which rocked beneath, immovably;
And the triumphant storm did flee,
Like a conqueror, swift and proud,
Between, with many a captive cloud,
A shapeless, dark and rapid crowd,
Each by lightning riven in half:
I heard the thunder hoarsely laugh:
Mighty fleets were strewn like chaff
And spread beneath a hell of death
O'er the white waters. I alit
On a great ship lightning-split,
And speeded hither on the sigh
Of one who gave an enemy
His plank, then plunged aside to die.

710

715

720

THIRD SPIRIT.

I sate beside a sage's bed,
 And the lamp was burning red
 Near the book where he had fed, 725
 When a Dream with plumes of flame,
 To his pillow hovering came,
 And I knew it was the same
 Which had kindled long ago
 Pity, eloquence, and woe; 730
 And the world awhile below
 Wore the shade, its lustre made.
 It has born me here as fleet
 As Desire's lightning feet:
 I must ride it back ere morrow, 735
 Or the sage will wake in sorrow.

FOURTH SPIRIT.

On a poet's lips I slept
 Dreaming like a love-adept
 In the sound his breathing kept;
 Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses, 740
 But feeds on the ærial kisses
 Of shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses.
 He will watch from dawn to gloom
 The lake-reflected sun illumine
 The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom, 745
 Nor heed nor see, what things they be;
 But from these create he can
 Forms more real than living man,
 Nurslings of immortality!
 One of these awakened me, 750
 And I sped to succour thee.

IONE.

Behold'st thou not two shapes from the east and west
 Come, as two doves to one beloved nest,
 Twin nurslings of the all-sustaining air
 On swift still wings glide down the atmosphere? 755
 And, hark! their sweet, sad voices! 'tis despair
 Mingled with love and then dissolved in sound.

PANTHEA.

Canst thou speak, sister? all my words are drowned.

IONE.

Their beauty gives me voice. See how they float
On their sustaining wings of skiey grain, 760
Orange and azure deepening into gold :
Their soft smiles light the air like a star's fire.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS.

Hast thou beheld the form of Love?

FIFTH SPIRIT.

As over wide dominions
I sped, like some swift cloud that wings the wide air's
wildernesses,
That planet-crested shape swept by on lightning-braided
pinions, 765
Scattering the liquid joy of life from his ambrosial tresses :
His footsteps paved the world with light; but as I past
'twas fading,
And hollow Ruin yawned behind: great sages bound in
madness,
And headless patriots, and pale youths who perished, un-
upbraiding,
Gleamed in the night. I wandered o'er, till thou, O
King of sadness, 770
Turned by thy smile the worst I saw to recollected gladness.

SIXTH SPIRIT.

Ah, sister! Desolation is a delicate thing:
It walks not on the earth, it floats not on the air,
But treads with killing footstep, and fans with silent wing
The tender hopes which in their hearts the best and
gentlest bear; 775
Who, soothed to false repose by the fanning plumes above
And the music-stirring motion of its soft and busy feet,
Dream visions of aerial joy, and call the monster, Love,
And wake, and find the shadow Pain, as he whom now we
greet.

CHORUS.

Tho' Ruin now Love's shadow be, 780
Following him, destroyingly,
On Death's white and winged steed,
Which the fleetest cannot flee,
Trampling down both flower and weed

Man and beast, and foul and fair, 785
 Like a tempest thro' the air;
 Thou shalt quell this horseman grim,
 Woundless though in heart or limb.

PROMETHEUS.

Spirits! how know ye this shall be?

CHORUS.

In the atmosphere we breathe, 790
 As buds grow red when the snow-storms flee,
 From spring gathering up beneath,
 Whose mild winds shake the elder brake,
 And the wandering herdsmen know
 That the white-thorn soon will blow: 795
 Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Peace,
 When they struggle to increase,
 Are to us as soft winds be
 To shepherd boys, the prophecy
 Which begins and ends in thee. 800

IONE.

Where are the Spirits fled?

PANTHEA.

Only a sense
 Remains of them, like the omnipotence
 Of music, when the inspired voice and lute
 Languish, ere yet the responses are mute,
 Which thro' the deep and labyrinthine soul, 805
 Like echoes thro' long caverns, wind and roll.

PROMETHEUS.

How fair these air-born shapes! and yet I feel
 Most vain all hope but love; and thou art far,
 Asia! who, when my being overflowed,
 Wert like a golden chalice to bright wine 810
 Which else had sunk into the thirsty dust.
 All things are still: alas! how heavily
 This quiet morning weighs upon my heart;
 Tho' I should dream I could even sleep with grief
 If slumber were denied not. I would fain 815
 Be what it is my destiny to be,
 The saviour and the strength of suffering man,

Or sink into the original gulph of things:
There is no agony, and no solace left;
Earth can console, Heaven can torment no more. 820

PANTHEA.

Hast thou forgotten one who watches thee
The cold dark night, and never sleeps but when
The shadow of thy spirit falls on her?

PROMETHEUS.

I said all hope was vain but love: thou lovest.

PANTHEA.

Deeply in truth; but the eastern star looks white, 825
And Asia waits in that far Indian vale
The scene of her sad exile; rugged once
And desolate and frozen, like this ravine;
But now invested with fair flowers and herbs,
And haunted by sweet airs and sounds, which flow 830
Among the woods and waters, from the æther
Of her transforming presence, which would fade
If it were mingled not with thine. Farewell!

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

MORNING. A LOVELY VALE IN THE INDIAN CAUCASUS. ASIA
ALONE.

ASIA.

From all the blasts of heaven thou hast descended:
Yes, like a spirit, like a thought, which makes
Unwonted tears throb to the horny eyes,
And beatings haunt the desolated heart,
Which should have learnt repose: thou hast descended 5
Cradled in tempests; thou dost wake, O Spring!
O child of many winds! As suddenly

Thou comest as the memory of a dream,
 Which now is sad because it hath been sweet;
 Like genius, or like joy which riseth up 10
 As from the earth, clothing with golden clouds
 The desert of our life.
 This is the season, this the day, the hour;
 At sunrise thou shouldst come, sweet sister mine,
 Too long desired, too long delaying, come! 15
 How like death-worms the wingless moments crawl!
 The point of one white star is quivering still
 Deep in the orange light of widening morn
 Beyond the purple mountains: thro' a chasm
 Of wind-divided mist the darker lake 20
 Reflects it: now it wanes: it gleams again
 As the waves fade, and as the burning threads
 Of woven cloud unravel in pale air:
 'Tis lost! and thro' yon peaks of cloudlike snow
 The roseate sun-light quivers: hear I not 25
 The Æolian music of her sea-green plumes
 Winnowing the crimson dawn?

PANTHEA ENTERS.

I feel, I see
 Those eyes which burn thro' smiles that fade in tears,
 Like stars half quenched in mists of silver dew.
 Belovèd and most beautiful, who wearest 30
 The shadow of that soul by which I live,
 How late thou art! the spherèd sun had climbed
 The sea; my heart was sick with hope, before
 The printless air felt thy belated plumes.

PANTHEA.

Pardon, great Sister! but my wings were faint 35
 With the delight of a remembered dream,
 As are the noon-tide plumes of summer winds
 Satiated with sweet flowers. I was wont to sleep
 Peacefully, and awake refreshed and calm
 Before the sacred Titan's fall, and thy 40
 Unhappy love, had made, thro' use and pity,
 Both love and woe familiar to my heart
 As they had grown to thine: erewhile I slept
 Under the glaucous caverns of old Ocean

Within dim bowers of green and purple moss, 45
Our young Ione's soft and milky arms
Locked then, as now, behind my dark, moist hair,
While my shut eyes and cheek were pressed within
The folded depth of her life-breathing bosom :
But not as now, since I am made the wind 50
Which fails beneath the music that I bear
Of thy most wordless converse ; since dissolved
Into the sense with which love talks, my rest
Was troubled and yet sweet ; my waking hours
Too full of care and pain.

ASIA.

Lift up thine eyes, 55
And let me read thy dream.

PANTHEA.

As I have said
With our sea-sister at his feet I slept.
The mountain mists, condensing at our voice
Under the moon, had spread their snowy flakes,
From the keen ice shielding our linked sleep. 60
Then two dreams came. One, I remember not.
But in the other his pale wound-worn limbs
Fell from Prometheus, and the azure night
Grew radiant with the glory of that form
Which lives unchanged within, and his voice fell 65
Like music which makes giddy the dim brain,
Faint with intoxication of keen joy :
" Sister of her whose footsteps pave the world
" With loveliness—more fair than aught but her,
" Whose shadow thou art—lift thine eyes on me." 70
I lifted them : the overpowering light
Of that immortal shape was shadowed o'er
By love ; which, from his soft and flowing limbs,
And passion-parted lips, and keen, faint eyes,
Steamed forth like vaporous fire ; an atmosphere 75
Which wrapt me in its all-dissolving power,
As the warm æther of the morning sun
Wraps ere it drinks some cloud of wandering dew.
I saw not, heard not, moved not, only felt
His presence flow and mingle thro' my blood 80

Till it became his life, and his grew mine,
And I was thus absorbed, until it past,
And like the vapours when the sun sinks down,
Gathering again in drops upon the pines,
And tremulous as they, in the deep night 85
My being was condensed; and as the rays
Of thought were slowly gathered, I could hear
His voice, whose accents lingered ere they died
Like footsteps of weak melody: thy name
Among the many sounds alone I heard 90
Of what might be articulate; tho' still
I listened through the night when sound was none.
Ione wakened then, and said to me:
"Canst thou divine what troubles me to night?
"I always knew what I desired before, 95
"Nor ever found delight to wish in vain.
"But now I cannot tell thee what I seek;
"I know not; something sweet, since it is sweet
"Even to desire; it is thy sport, false sister;
"Thou hast discovered some enchantment old, 100
"Whose spells have stolen my spirit as I slept
"And mingled it with thine: for when just now
"We kissed, I felt within thy parted lips
"The sweet air that sustained me, and the warmth
"Of the life-blood, for loss of which I faint, 105
"Quivered between our intertwining arms."
I answered not, for the Eastern star grew pale,
But fled to thee.

ASIA.

Thou speakest, but thy words
Are as the air: I feel them not: Oh, lift
Thine eyes, that I may read his written soul! 110

PANTHEA.

I lift them tho' they droop beneath the load
Of that they would express: what canst thou see
But thine own fairest shadow imaged there?

ASIA.

Thine eyes are like the deep, blue, boundless heaven
Contracted to two circles underneath 115
Their long, fine lashes; dark, far, measureless,

Orb within orb, and line thro' line inwoven.

PANTHEA.

Why lookest thou as if a spirit past?

ASIA.

There is a change: beyond their inmost depth
I see a shade, a shape: 'tis He, arrayed 120
In the soft light of his own smiles, which spread
Like radiance from the cloud-surrounded moon.
Prometheus, it is thine! depart not yet!
Say not those smiles that we shall meet again
Within that bright pavilion which their beams 125
Shall build on the waste world? The dream is told.
What shape is that between us? Its rude hair
Roughens the wind that lifts it, its regard
Is wild and quick, yet 'tis a thing of air
For thro' its grey robe gleams the golden dew 130
Whose stars the noon has quenched not.

DREAM.

Follow! Follow!

PANTHEA.

It is mine other dream.

ASIA.

It disappears.

PANTHEA.

It passes now into my mind. Methought
As we sate here, the flower-infolding buds
Burst on yon lightning-blasted almond-tree, 135
When swift from the white Scythian wilderness
A wind swept forth wrinkling the Earth with frost:
I looked, and all the blossoms were blown down;
But on each leaf was stamped, as the blue bells
Of Hyacinth tell Apollo's written grief, 140
O, FOLLOW, FOLLOW!

ASIA.

As you speak, your words

Fill, pause by pause, my own forgotten sleep
With shapes. Methought among the lawns together
We wandered, underneath the young grey dawn,
And multitudes of dense white fleecy clouds 145
Were wandering in thick flocks along the mountains

Shepherded by the slow, unwilling wind;
 And the white dew on the new bladed grass,
 Just piercing the dark earth, hung silently:
 And there was more which I remember not: 150
 But on the shadows of the morning clouds,
 Athwart the purple mountain slope, was written
 FOLLOW, O, FOLLOW! as they vanished by,
 And on each herb, from which Heaven's dew had fallen,
 The like was stamped, as with a withering fire, 155
 A wind arose among the pines; it shook
 The clinging music from their boughs, and then
 Low, sweet, faint sounds, like the farewell of ghosts,
 Were heard: OH, FOLLOW, FOLLOW, FOLLOW ME!
 And then I said: "Panthea, look on me." 160
 But in the depth of those belovèd eyes
 Still I saw, FOLLOW, FOLLOW!

ECHO.

Follow, follow!

PANTHEA.

The crags, this clear spring morning, mock our voices
 As they were spirit-tongued.

ASIA.

It is some being
 Around the crags. What fine clear sounds! O, list! 165

ECHOES, UNSEEN.

Echoes we: listen!

We cannot stay:

As dew-stars glisten

Then fade away—

Child of Ocean! 170

ASIA.

Hark! Spirits speak. The liquid responses
 Of their aërial tongues yet sound.

PANTHEA.

I hear.

ECHOES.

O, follow, follow,

As our voice recedeth

Thro' the caverns hollow,

Where the forest spreadeth; 175

(MORE DISTANT)

O, follow, follow !
Thro' the caverns hollow,
As the song floats thou pursue,
Where the wild bee never flew, 180
Thro' the noon-tide darkness deep,
By the odour-breathing sleep
Of faint night flowers, and the waves
At the fountain-lighted caves,
While our music, wild and sweet, 185
Mocks thy gently falling feet,
Child of Ocean !

ASIA.

Shall we pursue the sound ? It grows more faint
And distant.

PANTHEA.

List ! the strain floats nearer now.

ECHOES.

In the world unknown 190
Sleeps a voice unspoken ;
By thy step alone
Can its rest be broken ;
Child of Ocean !

ASIA.

How the notes sink upon the ebbing wind ! 195

ECHOES.

O, follow, follow !
Thro' the caverns hollow,
As the song floats thou pursue,
By the woodland noon-tide dew ;
By the forests, lakes, and fountains 200
Thro' the many-folded mountains ;
To the rents, and gulphs, and chasms,
Where the Earth reposed from spasms,
On the day when He and thou
Parted, to commingle now ; 205
Child of Ocean !

ASIA.

Come, sweet Panthea, link thy hand in mine,
And follow, ere the voices fade away.

SCENE II.

A FOREST, INTERMINGLED WITH ROCKS AND CAVERNS. ASIA AND PANTHEA PASS INTO IT. TWO YOUNG FAUNS ARE SITTING ON A ROCK, LISTENING.

SEMICHORUS I. OF SPIRITS.

The path thro' which that lovely twain
Have past, by cedar, pine, and yew,
And each dark tree that ever grew,
Is curtained out from Heaven's wide blue;
Nor sun, nor moon, nor wind, nor rain, 5
Can pierce its interwoven bowers,
Nor aught, save where some cloud of dew,
Drifted along the earth-creeping breeze,
Between the trunks of the hoar trees,
Hangs each a pearl in the pale flowers 10
Of the green laurel, blown anew;
And bends, and then fades silently,
One frail and fair anemone:
Or when some star of many a one
That climbs and wanders thro' steep night, 15
Has found the cleft thro' which alone
Beams fall from high those depths upon
Ere it is borne away, away,
By the swift Heavens that cannot stay,
It scatters drops of golden light, 20
Like lines of rain that ne'er unite:
And the gloom divine is all around.
And underneath is the mossy ground;

SEMICHORUS II.

There the voluptuous nightingales,
Are awake thro' all the broad noon-day. 25
When one with bliss or sadness fails,
And thro' the windless ivy-boughs,
Sick with sweet love, droops dying away
On its mate's music-panting bosom;
Another from the swinging blossom, 30
Watching to catch the languid close

Of the last strain, then lifts on high
The wings of the weak melody,
'Till some new strain of feeling bear
The song, and all the woods are mute ; 35
When there is heard thro' the dim air
The rush of wings, and rising there
Like many a lake-surrounded flute,
Sounds overflow the listener's brain
So sweet, that joy is almost pain. 40

SEMICHORUS I.

There those enchanted eddies play
Of echoes, music-tongued, which draw,
By Demogorgon's mighty law,
With melting rapture, or sweet awe,
All spirits on that secret way ; 45
As inland boats are driven to Ocean
Down streams made strong with mountain-thaw :
And first there comes a gentle sound
To those in talk or slumber bound,
And wakes the destined. Soft emotion 50
Attracts, impels them : those who saw
Say from the breathing earth behind
There steams a plume-uplifting wind
Which drives them on their path, while they
Believe their own swift wings and feet 55
The sweet desires within obey :
And so they float upon their way,
Until, still sweet, but loud and strong,
The storm of sound is driven along,
Sucked up and hurrying : as they fleet 60
Behind, its gathering billows meet
And to the fatal mountain bear
Like clouds amid the yielding air.

FIRST FAUN.

Canst thou imagine where those spirits live
Which make such delicate music in the woods ? 65
We haunt within the least frequented caves
And closest coverts, and we know these wilds,
Yet never meet them, tho' we hear them oft :
Where may they hide themselves ?

SECOND FAUN.

'Tis hard to tell:

I have heard those more skilled in spirits say, 70
The bubbles, which the enchantment of the sun
Sucks from the pale faint water-flowers that pave
The oozy bottom of clear lakes and pools,
Are the pavilions where such dwell and float
Under the green and golden atmosphere 75
Which noon-tide kindles thro' the woven leaves;
And when these burst, and the thin fiery air,
The which they breathed within those lucent domes,
Ascends to flow like meteors thro' the night,
They ride on them, and rein their headlong speed, 80
And bow their burning crests, and glide in fire
Under the waters of the earth again.

FIRST FAUN.

If such live thus, have others other lives,
Under pink blossoms or within the bells
Of meadow flowers, or folded violets deep, 85
Or on their dying odours, when they die,
Or in the sunlight of the spherèd dew?

SECOND FAUN.

Aye, many more which we may well divine.
But, should we stay to speak, noontide would come,
And thwart Silenus find his goats undrawn, 90
And grudge to sing those wise and lovely songs
Of fate, and chance, and God, and Chaos old,
And Love, and the chained Titan's woful doom,
And how he shall be loosed, and make the earth
One brotherhood: delightful strains which cheer 95
Our solitary twilights, and which charm
To silence the unenvying nightingales.

SCENE III.

A PINNACLE OF ROCK AMONG MOUNTAINS. ASIA AND
PANTHEA.

PANTHEA.

Hither the sound has borne us—to the realm
Of Demogorgon, and the mighty portal,
Like a volcano's meteor-breathing chasm,
Whence the oracular vapour is hurled up
Which lonely men drink wandering in their youth, 5
And call truth, virtue, love, genius, or joy,
That maddening wine of life, whose dregs they drain
To deep intoxication; and uplift,
Like Mænads who cry loud, Evøe! Evøe!
The voice which is contagion to the world. 10

ASIA.

Fit throne for such a Power! Magnificent!
How glorious art thou, Earth! And if thou be
The shadow of some spirit lovelier still,
Though evil stain its work, and it should be
Like its creation, weak yet beautiful, 15
I could fall down and worship that and thee.
Even now my heart adoreth: Wonderful!
Look, sister, ere the vapour dim thy brain:
Beneath is a wide plain of billowy mist,
As a lake, paving in the morning sky, 20
With azure waves which burst in silver light,
Some Indian vale. Behold it, rolling on
Under the curdling winds, and islanding
The peak whereon we stand, midway, around,
Encinctured by the dark and blooming forests, 25
Dim twilight-lawns, and stream-illumined caves,
And wind-enchanted shapes of wandering mist;
And far on high the keen sky-cleaving mountains
From icy spires of sun-like radiance fling
The dawn, as lifted Ocean's dazzling spray, 30
From some Atlantic islet scattered up,
Spangles the wind with lamp-like water-drops .

The vale is girdled with their walls, a howl
 Of cataracts from their thaw-cloven ravines,
 Satiates the listening wind, continuous, vast, 35
 Awful as silence. Hark! the rushing snow!
 The sun-awakened avalanche! whose mass,
 Thrice sifted by the storm, had gathered there
 Flake after flake, in heaven-defying minds
 As thought by thought is piled, till some great truth 40
 Is loosened, and the nations echo round,
 Shaken to their roots, as do the mountains now.

PANTHEA.

Look how the gusty sea of mist is breaking
 In crimson foam, even at our feet! it rises
 As Ocean at the enchantment of the moon 45
 Round foodless men wrecked on some oozy isle.

ASIA.

The fragments of the cloud are scattered up;
 The wind that lifts them disentwines my hair;
 Its billows now sweep o'er mine eyes; my brain
 Grows dizzy; I see thin shapes within the mist. 50

PANTHEA.

A countenance with beckoning smiles: there burns
 An azure fire within its golden locks!
 Another and another: hark! they speak!

SONG OF SPIRITS.

To the deep, to the deep,
 Down, down! 55
 Through the shade of sleep,
 Through the cloudy strife
 Of Death and of Life;
 Through the veil and the bar
 Of things which seem and are 60
 Even to the steps of the remotest throne,
 Down, down!

While the sound whirls around,

Down, down!

As the fawn draws the hound,
 As the lightning the vapour,
 As a weak moth the taper; 65

Death, despair ; love, sorrow ;
Time both ; to day, to morrow ;
As steel obeys the spirit of the stone, 70
Down, down !

Through the grey, void abysm,
Down, down !
Where the air is no prism,
And the moon and stars are not, 75
And the cavern-crag wears not
The radiance of Heaven,
Nor the gloom to Earth given,
Where there is one pervading, one alone,
Down, down ! 80

In the depth of the deep
Down, down !
Like veiled lightning asleep,
Like the spark nursed in embers,
The last look Love remembers, 85
Like a diamond, which shines
On the dark wealth of mines,
A spell is treasured but for thee alone.
Down, down !

We have bound thee, we guide thee ; 90
Down, down !
With the bright form beside thee ;
Resist not the weakness,
Such strength is in meekness
That the Eternal, the Immortal, 95
Must unloose through life's portal
The snake-like Doom coiled underneath his throne
By that alone.

SCENE IV.

THE CAVE OF DEMOGORGON. ASIA AND PANTHEA.

PANTHEA.

What veiled form sits on that ebon throne?

ASIA.

The veil has fallen.

PANTHEA.

I see a mighty darkness
Filling the seat of power, and rays of gloom
Dart round, as light from the meridian sun,
Ungazed upon and shapeless; neither limb,
Nor form, nor outline; yet we feel it is
A living Spirit.

DEMOGORGON.

Ask what thou wouldst know.

ASIA.

What canst thou tell?

DEMOGORGON.

All things thou dar'st demand.

ASIA.

Who made the living world?

DEMOGORGON.

God.

ASIA.

Who made all

That it contains? thought, passion, reason, will,
Imagination?

DEMOGORGON.

God: Almighty God.

ASIA.

Who made that sense which, when the winds of spring
In rarest visitation, or the voice
Of one beloved heard in youth alone,
Fills the faint eyes with falling tears which dim
The radiant looks of unbewailing flowers,
And leaves this peopled earth a solitude

When it returns no more?

DEMOGORGON.

Merciful God.

ASIA.

And who made terror, madness, crime, remorse,
Which from the links of the great chain of things, 20
To every thought within the mind of man
Sway and drag heavily, and each one reels
Under the load towards the pit of death;
Abandoned hope, and love that turns to hate;
And self-contempt, bitterer to drink than blood; 25
Pain, whose unheeded and familiar speech
Is howling, and keen shrieks, day after day;
And Hell, or the sharp fear of Hell?

DEMOGORGON.

He reigns.

ASIA.

Utter his name: a world pining in pain
Asks but his name: curses shall drag him down. 30

DEMOGORGON.

He reigns.

ASIA.

I feel, I know it: who?

DEMOGORGON.

He reigns.

ASIA.

Who reigns? There was the Heaven and Earth at first,
And Light and Love; then Saturn, from whose throne
Time fell, an envious shadow: such the state
Of the earth's primal spirits beneath his sway, 35
As the calm joy of flowers and living leaves
Before the wind or sun has withered them
And semivital worms; but he refused
The birthright of their being, knowledge, power,
The skill which wields the elements, the thought 40
Which pierces this dim universe like light,
Self-empire, and the majesty of love;
For thirst of which they fainted. Then Prometheus
Gave wisdom, which is strength, to Jupiter,
And with this law alone, 'Let man be free,' 45

Clothed him with the dominion of wide Heaven.
To know nor faith, nor love, nor law; to be
Omnipotent but friendless is to reign;
And Jove now reigned; for on the race of man
First famine, and then toil, and then disease, 50
Strife, wounds, and ghastly death unseen before,
Fell; and the unseasonable seasons drove
With alternating shafts of frost and fire,
Their shelterless, pale tribes to mountain caves:
And in their desert hearts fierce wants he sent, 55
And mad disquietudes, and shadows idle
Of unreal good, which levied mutual war,
So ruining the lair wherein they raged.
Prometheus saw, and waked the legioned hopes
Which sleep within folded Elysian flowers, 60
Nepenthe, Moly, Amaranth, fadeless blooms,
That they might hide with thin and rainbow wings
The shape of Death; and Love he sent to bind
The disunited tendrils of that vine
Which bears the wine of life, the human heart; 65
And he tamed fire which, like some beast of prey,
Most terrible, but lovely, played beneath
The frown of man; and tortured to his will
Iron and gold, the slaves and signs of power,
And gems and poisons, and all subtlest forms 70
Hidden beneath the mountains and the waves.
He gave man speech, and speech created thought,
Which is the measure of the universe;
And Science struck the thrones of earth and heaven,
Which shook, but fell not; and the harmonious mind 75
Poured itself forth in all-prophetic song;
And music lifted up the listening spirit
Until it walked, exempt from mortal care,
Godlike, o'er the clear billows of sweet sound;
And human hands first mimicked and then mocked, 80
With moulded limbs more lovely than its own,
The human form, till marble grew divine;
And mothers, gazing, drank the love men see
Reflected in their race, behold, and perish.
He told the hidden power of herbs and springs, 85

And Disease drank and slept. Death grew like sleep.
He taught the implicated orbits woven
Of the wide-wandering stars; and how the sun
Changes his lair, and by what secret spell
The pale moon is transformed, when her broad eye 90
Gazes not on the interlunar sea:
He taught to rule, as life directs the limbs,
The tempest-wingèd chariots of the Ocean,
And the Celt knew the Indian. Cities then
Were built, and through their snow-like columns flowed 95
The warm winds, and the azure æther shone,
And the blue sea and shadowy hills were seen.
Such, the alleviations of his state,
Prometheus gave to man, for which he hangs
Withering in destined pain: but who reigns down 100
Evil, the immedicable plague, which, while
Man looks on his creation like a God
And sees that it is glorious, drives him on
The wreck of his own will, the scorn of earth,
The outcast, the abandoned, the alone? 105
Not Jove: while yet his frown shook heaven, aye when
His adversary from adamantine chains
Cursed him, he trembled like a slave. Declare
Who is his master? Is he too a slave?

DEMOGORGON.

All spirits are enslaved which serve things evil: 110
Thou knowest if Jupiter be such or no.

ASIA.

Whom called'st thou God?

DEMOGORGON.

I spoke but as ye speak,
For Jove is the supreme of living things.

ASIA.

Who is the master of the slave?

DEMOGORGON.

If the abysm
Could vomit forth its secrets. But a voice 115
Is wanting, the deep truth is imageless;
For what would it avail to bid thee gaze

On the revolving world? What to bid speak
Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance and Change? To these
All things are subject but eternal Love. 120

ASIA.

So much I asked before, and my heart gave
The response thou hast given; and of such truths
Each to itself must be the oracle.
One more demand; and do thou answer me
As mine own soul would answer, did it know 125
That which I ask. Prometheus shall arise
Henceforth the sun of this rejoicing world:
When shall the destined hour arrive?

DEMOGORGON.

Behold!

ASIA.

The rocks are cloven, and through the purple night
I see cars drawn by rainbow-wingèd steeds 130
Which trample the dim winds: in each there stands
A wild-eyed charioteer urging their flight.
Some look behind, as fiends pursued them there,
And yet I see no shapes but the keen stars:
Others, with burning eyes, lean forth, and drink 135
With eager lips the wind of their own speed,
As if the thing they loved fled on before.
And now, even now, they clasped it. Their bright locks
Stream like a comet's flashing hair: they all
Sweep onward.

DEMOGORGON.

These are the immortal Hours, 140
Of whom thou didst demand. One waits for thee.

ASIA.

A spirit with a dreadful countenance
Checks its dark chariot by the craggy gulph.
Unlike thy brethren, ghastly charioteer,
Who art thou? Whither wouldst thou bear me? Speak! 145

SPIRIT.

I am the shadow of a destiny
More dread than is my aspect: ere yon planet
Has set, the darkness which ascends with me
Shall wrap in lasting night heaven's kingless throne.

ASIA.

What meanest thou?

PANTHEA.

That terrible shadow floats 155
Up from its throne, as may the lurid smoke
Of earthquake-ruined cities o'er the sea.
Lo! it ascends the car; the coursers fly
Terrified: watch its path among the stars
Blackening the night!

ASIA.

Thus I am answered: strange! 155

PANTHEA.

See, near the verge, another chariot stays;
An ivory shell inlaid with crimson fire,
Which comes and goes within its sculptured rim
Of delicate strange tracery; the young spirit
That guides it has the dove-like eyes of hope; 160
How its soft smiles attract the soul! as light
Lures wingèd insects thro' the lampless air.

SPIRIT.

My coursers are fed with the lightning,
They drink of the whirlwind's stream,
And when the red morning is brightning 165
They bathe in the fresh sunbeam;
They have strength for their swiftness I deem,
Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.

I desire: and their speed makes night kindle;
I fear: they outstrip the Typhoon; 170
Ere the cloud piled on Atlas can dwindle
We encircle the earth and the moon:
We shall rest from long labours at noon:
Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.

SCENE V.

THE CAR PAUSES WITHIN A CLOUD ON THE TOP OF A SNOWY MOUNTAIN. ASIA, PANTHEA, AND THE SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.

SPIRIT.

On the brink of the night and the morning
My coursers are wont to respire;
But the Earth has just whispered a warning
That their flight must be swifter than fire:
They shall drink the hot speed of desire!

5

ASIA.

Thou breathest on their nostrils, but my breath
Would give them swifter speed.

SPIRIT.

Alas! it could not.

PANTHEA.

Oh Spirit! pause, and tell whence is the light
Which fills the cloud? the sun is yet unrisen.

SPIRIT.

The sun will rise not until noon. Apollo
Is held in heaven by wonder; and the light
Which fills this vapour, as the aerial hue
Of fountain-gazing roses fills the water,
Flows from thy mighty sister.

10

PANTHEA.

Yes, I feel—

ASIA.

What is it with thee, sister? Thou art pale.

15

PANTHEA.

How thou art changed! I dare not look on thee;
I feel but see thee not. I scarce endure
The radiance of thy beauty. Some good change
Is working in the elements, which suffer
Thy presence thus unveiled. The Nereids tell
That on the day when the clear hyaline
Was cloven at thy uprise, and thou didst stand
Within a veined shell, which floated on
Over the calm floor of the crystal sea,

20

Among the Ægean isles, and by the shores 25
Which bear thy name; love, like the atmosphere
Of the sun's fire filling the living world,
Burst from thee, and illumined earth and heaven
And the deep ocean and the sunless caves
And all that dwells within them; till grief cast 30
Eclipse upon the soul from which it came:
Such art thou now; nor is it I alone,
Thy sister, thy companion, thine own chosen one,
But the whole world which seeks thy sympathy.
Hear'st thou not sounds i' the air which speak the love 35
Of all articulate beings? Feel'st thou not
The inanimate winds enamoured of thee? List! (*Music.*)

ASIA.

Thy words are sweeter than aught else but his
Whose echoes they are: yet all love is sweet,
Given or returned. Common as light is love, 40
And its familiar voice wearies not ever.
Like the wide heaven, the all-sustaining air,
It makes the reptile equal to the God:
They who inspire it most are fortunate,
As I am now; but those who feel it most 45
Are happier still, after long sufferings,
As I shall soon become.

PANTHEA.

List! Spirits speak.

VOICE IN THE AIR, SINGING.

Life of Life! thy lips enkindle
With their love the breath between them;
And thy smiles before they dwindle 50
Make the cold air fire; then screen them
In those looks, where whoso gazes
Faints, entangled in their mazes.

Child of Light! thy limbs are burning
Thro' the vest which seems to hide them; 55
As the radiant lines of morning
Thro' the clouds ere they divide them;
And this atmosphere divinest
Shrouds thee wheresoe'er thou shinest.

Fair are others; none beholds thee, 60
But thy voice sounds low and tender
Like the fairest, for it folds thee
From the sight, that liquid splendour,
And all feel, yet see thee never,
As I feel now, lost for ever! 65

Lamp of Earth! where'er thou movest
Its dim shapes are clad with brightness,
And the souls of whom thou lovest
Walk upon the winds with lightness,
Till they fail, as I am failing, 70
Dizzy, lost, yet unbewailing!

ASIA.

My soul is an enchanted boat,
Which, like a sleeping swan, doth float
Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing;
And thine doth like an angel sit 75
Beside a helm conducting it,
Whilst all the winds with melody are ringing.
It seems to float ever, for ever,
Upon that many-winding river,
Between mountains, woods, abysses, 80
A paradise of wildernesses!
Till, like one in slumber bound,
Borne to the ocean, I float down, around,
Into a sea profound, of ever-spreading sound:

Meanwhile thy spirit lifts its pinions 85
In music's most serene dominions;
Catching the winds that fan that happy heaven.
And we sail on, away, afar,
Without a course, without a star,
But, by the instinct of sweet music driven; 90
Till through Elysian garden islets
By thee, most beautiful of pilots,
Where never mortal pinnacle glided,
The boat of my desire is guided:
Realms where the air we breathe is love, 95
Which in the winds and on the waves doth move,
Harmonizing this earth with what we feel above.

We have past Age's icy caves,
And Manhood's dark and tossing waves,
And Youth's smooth ocean, smiling to betray: 100
Beyond the glassy gulphs we flee
Of shadow-peopled Infancy,
Through Death and Birth, to a diviner day;
A paradise of vaulted bowers,
Lit by downward-gazing flowers, 105
And watery paths that wind between
Wildernesses calm and green,
Peopled by shapes too bright to see,
And rest, having beheld; somewhat like thee;
Which walk upon the sea, and chaunt melodiously! 110

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

HEAVEN. JUPITER ON HIS THRONE; THETIS AND THE OTHER
DEITIES ASSEMBLED.

JUPITER.

Ye congregated powers of heaven, who share
The glory and the strength of him ye serve,
Rejoice! henceforth I am omnipotent.
All else had been subdued to me; alone
The soul of man, like unextinguished fire, 5
Yet burns towards heaven with fierce reproach, and doubt,
And lamentation, and reluctant prayer,
Hurling up insurrection, which might make
Our antique empire insecure, though built
On eldest faith, and hell's coeval, fear; 10
And tho' my curses thro' the pendulous air,
Like snow on herbless peaks, fall flake by flake,
And cling to it; tho' under my wrath's might
It climb the crags of life, step after step,
Which wound it, as ice wounds unsandalled feet, 15

It yet remains supreme o'er misery,
Aspiring, unrepressed, yet soon to fall:
Even now have I begotten a strange wonder,
That fatal child, the terror of the earth,
Who waits but till the destined hour arrive, 20
Bearing from Demogorgon's vacant throne
The dreadful might of ever-living limbs
Which clothed that awful spirit unbeheld,
To redescend, and trample out the spark.

Pour forth heaven's wine, Idæan Ganymede, 25
And let it fill the Dædal cups like fire,
And from the flower-inwoven soil divine
Ye all-triumphant harmonies arise,
As dew from earth under the twilight stars:
Drink! be the nectar circling thro' your veins 30
The soul of joy, ye ever-living Gods,
Till exultation burst in one wide voice
Like music from Elysian winds.

And thou
Ascend beside me, veiled in the light
Of the desire which makes thee one with me, 35
Thetis, bright image of eternity!
When thou didst cry, "Insufferable might!
"God! Spare me! I sustain not the quick flames,
"The penetrating presence; all my being
"Like him whom the Numidian seps did thaw 40
"Into a dew with poison, is dissolved,
"Sinking thro' its foundations:" even then
Two mighty spirits, mingling, made a third
Mightier than either, which, unbodied now,
Between us floats, felt, although unbeheld, 45
Waiting the incarnation, which ascends,
(Hear ye the thunder of the fiery wheels
Grinding the winds?) from Demogorgon's throne.
Victory! victory! Feel'st thou not, O world,
The earthquake of his chariot thundering up 50
Olympus?

[*The Car of the HOUR arrives. DEMOGORGON descends, and moves towards the Throne of JUPITER.*]

Awful shape, what art thou? Speak!

DEMOGORGON.

Eternity. Demand no direr name.

Descend, and follow me down the abyss.

I am thy child, as thou wert Saturn's child;

Mightier than thee: and we must dwell together 55

Henceforth in darkness. Lift thy lightnings not.

The tyranny of heaven none may retain,

Or reassume, or hold, succeeding thee:

Yet if thou wilt, as 'tis the destiny

Of trodden worms to writhe till they are dead, 60

Put forth thy might.

JUPITER.

Detested prodigy!

Even thus beneath the deep Titanian prisons

I trample thee! thou lingerest?

Mercy! mercy!

No pity, no release, no respite! Oh,

That thou wouldst make mine enemy my judge, 65

Even where he hangs, seared by my long revenge,

On Caucasus! he would not doom me thus.

Gentle, and just, and dreadless, is he not

The monarch of the world? What then art thou?

No refuge! no appeal!

Sink with me then, 70

We two will sink on the wide waves of ruin,

Even as a vulture and a snake outspent

Drop, twisted in inextricable fight,

Into a shoreless sea. Let hell unlock

Its mounded oceans of tempestuous fire, 75

And whelm on them into the bottomless void

This desolated world, and thee, and me,

The conqueror and the conquered, and the wreck

Of that for which they combated.

Ai! Ai!

The elements obey me not. I sink 80

Dizzily down, ever, for ever, down.

And, like a cloud, mine enemy above

Darkens my fall with victory! Ai, Ai!

SCENE II.

THE MOUTH OF A GREAT RIVER IN THE ISLAND ATLANTIS. OCEAN
IS DISCOVERED RECLINING NEAR THE SHORE; APOLLO STANDS
BESIDE HIM.

OCEAN.

He fell, thou sayest, beneath his conqueror's frown?

APOLLO.

Aye, when the strife was ended which made dim
The orb I rule, and shook the solid stars,
The terrors of his eye illumined heaven
With sanguine light, through the thick ragged skirts 5
Of the victorious darkness, as he fell:
Like the last glare of day's red agony,
Which, from a rent among the fiery clouds,
Burns far along the tempest-wrinkled deep.

OCEAN.

He sunk to the abyss? To the dark void? 10

APOLLO.

An eagle so caught in some bursting cloud
On Caucasus, his thunder-baffled wings
Entangled in the whirlwind, and his eyes
Which gazed on the undazzling sun, now blinded
By the white lightning, while the ponderous hail 15
Beats on his struggling form, which sinks at length
Prone, and the aerial ice clings over it.

OCEAN.

Henceforth the fields of Heaven-reflecting sea
Which are my realm, will heave, unstained with blood,
Beneath the uplifting winds, like plains of corn 20
Swayed by the summer air; my streams will flow
Round many-peopled continents, and round
Fortunate isles; and from their glassy thrones
Blue Proteus and his humid nymphs shall mark
The shadow of fair ships, as mortals see 25
The floating bark of the light-laden moon
With that white star, its sightless pilot's crest,
Borne down the rapid sunset's ebbing sea;

Tracking their path no more by blood and groans,
And desolation, and the mingled voice 30
Of slavery and command; but by the light
Of wave-reflected flowers, and floating odours,
And music soft, and mild, free, gentle voices,
And sweetest music, such as spirits love.

APOLLO.

And I shall gaze not on the deeds which make 35
My mind obscure with sorrow, as eclipse
Darkens the sphere I guide; but list, I hear
The small, clear, silver lute of the young Spirit
That sits i' the morning star.

OCEAN.

Thou must away;
Thy steeds will pause at even, till when farewell: 40
The loud deep calls me home even now to feed it
With azure calm out of the emerald urns
Which stand for ever full beside my throne.
Behold the Nereids under the green sea,
Their wavering limbs borne on the wind-like stream, 45
Their white arms lifted o'er their streaming hair
With garlands pied and starry sea-flower crowns,
Hastening to grace their mighty sister's joy.

(A sound of waves is heard.)

It is the unpastured sea hungering for calm.
Peace, monster; I come now. Farewell.

APOLLO.

Farewell. 50

SCENE III.

CAUCASUS. PROMETHEUS, HERCULES, IONE, THE EARTH,
SPIRITS, ASIA, AND PANTHEA, BORNE IN THE CAR WITH
THE SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.

HERCULES UNBINDS PROMETHEUS, WHO DESCENDS.

HERCULES.

Most glorious among spirits, thus doth strength
To wisdom, courage, and long-suffering love,

And thee, who art the form they animate,
Minister like a slave.

PROMETHEUS.

Thy gentle words
Are sweeter even than freedom long desired 5
And long delayed.

Asia, thou light of life,
Shadow of beauty unbeheld: and ye,
Fair sister nymphs, who made long years of pain
Sweet to remember, thro' your love and care:
Henceforth we will not part. There is a cave, 10
All overgrown with trailing odorous plants,
Which curtain out the day with leaves and flowers,
And paved with veined emerald, and a fountain
Leaps in the midst with an awakening sound.
From its curved roof the mountain's frozen tears 15
Like snow, or silver, or long diamond spires,
Hang downward, raining forth a doubtful light:
And there is heard the ever-moving air,
Whispering without from tree to tree, and birds,
And bees; and all around are mossy seats, 20
And the rough walls are clothed with long soft grass;
A simple dwelling, which shall be our own;
Where we will sit and talk of time and change,
As the world ebbs and flows, ourselves unchanged.
What can hide man from mutability? 25
And if ye sigh, then I will smile; and thou,
Ione, shalt chaunt fragments of sea-music,
Until I weep, when ye shall smile away
The tears she brought, which yet were sweet to shed.
We will entangle buds and flowers and beams 30
Which twinkle on the fountain's brim, and make
Strange combinations out of common things,
Like human babes in their brief innocence;
And we will search, with looks and words of love,
For hidden thoughts, each lovelier than the last, 35
Our unexhausted spirits; and like lutes
Touched by the skill of the enamoured wind,
Weave harmonies divine, yet ever new,
From difference sweet where discord cannot be;

And hither come, sped on the charmed winds, 40
Which meet from all the points of heaven, as bees
From every flower aerial Æna feeds,
At their known island-homes in Himera,
The echoes of the human world, which tell
Of the low voice of love, almost unheard, 45
And dove-eyed pity's murmured pain, and music,
Itself the echo of the heart, and all
That tempers or improves man's life, now free;
And lovely apparitions, dim at first,
Then radiant, as the mind, arising bright 50
From the embrace of beauty, whence the forms
Of which these are the phantoms, casts on them
The gathered rays which are reality,
Shall visit us, the progeny immortal
Of Painting, Sculpture, and rapt Poesy, 55
And arts, tho' unimagined, yet to be.
The wandering voices and the shadows these
Of all that man becomes, the mediators
Of that best worship love, by him and us
Given and returned; swift shapes and sounds, which grow
More fair and soft as man grows wise and kind, 60
And veil by veil, evil and error fall:
Such virtue has the cave and place around.

(Turning to the Spirit of the Hour.)

For thee, fair Spirit, one toil remains. Ione,
Give her that curvèd shell, which Proteus old 65
Made Asia's nuptial boon, breathing within it
A voice to be accomplished, and which thou
Didst hide in grass under the hollow rock.

IONE.

Thou most desired Hour, more loved and lovely
Than all thy sisters, this is the mystic shell; 70
See the pale azure fading into silver
Lining it with a soft yet glowing light:
Looks it not like lulled music sleeping there?

SPIRIT.

It seems in truth the fairest shell of Ocean:
Its sound must be at once both sweet and strange. 75

PROMETHEUS.

Go, borne over the cities of mankind
On whirlwind-footed coursers: once again
Outspeed the sun around the orbèd world;
And as thy chariot cleaves the kindling air,
Thou breathe into the many-folded shell, 80
Loosening its mighty music; it shall be
As thunder mingled with clear echoes: then
Return; and thou shalt dwell beside our cave.
And thou, O, Mother Earth!—

THE EARTH.

I hear, I feel;
Thy lips are on me, and thy touch runs down 85
Even to the adamantine central gloom
Along these marble nerves; 'tis life, 'tis joy,
And thro' my withered, old, and icy frame
The warmth of an immortal youth shoots down
Circling. Henceforth the many children fair 90
Folded in my sustaining arms; all plants,
And creeping forms, and insects rainbow-winged,
And birds, and beasts, and fish, and human shapes,
Which drew disease and pain from my wan bosom,
Draining the poison of despair, shall take 95
And interchange sweet nutriment; to me
Shall they become like sister-antelopes
By one fair dam, snow-white and swift as wind,
Nursed among lilies near a brimming stream.
The dew-mists of my sunless sleep shall float 100
Under the stars like baln: night-folded flowers
Shall suck unwithering hues in their repose:
And men and beasts in happy dreams shall gather
Strength for the coming day, and all its joy:
And death shall be the last embrace of her 105
Who takes the life she gave, even as a mother
Folding her child, says, "Leave me not again."

ASIA.

Oh, mother! wherefore speak the name of death?
Cease they to love, and move, and breathe, and speak,
Who die?

THE EARTH.

It would avail not to reply: 110
Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known
But to the uncommunicating dead.
Death is the veil which those who live call life:
They sleep, and it is lifted: and meanwhile
In mild variety the seasons mild 115
With rainbow-skirted showers, and odorous winds,
And long blue meteors cleansing the dull night,
And the life-kindling shafts of the keen sun's
All-piercing bow, and the dew-mingled rain
Of the calm moonbeams, a soft influence mild, 120
Shall clothe the forests and the fields, aye, even
The crag-built desarts of the barren deep,
With ever-living leaves, and fruits, and flowers.
And thou! There is a cavern where my spirit
Was panted forth in anguish whilst thy pain 125
Made my heart mad, and those who did inhale it
Became mad too, and built a temple there,
And spoke, and were oracular, and lured
The erring nations round to mutual war,
And faithless faith, such as Jove kept with thee; 130
Which breath now rises, as amongst tall weeds
A violet's exhalation, and it fills
With a serener light and crimson air
Intense, yet soft, the rocks and woods around;
It feeds the quick growth of the serpent vine, 135
And the dark linked ivy tangling wild,
And budding, blown, or odour-faded blooms
Which star the winds with points of coloured light,
As they rain thro' them, and bright golden globes
Of fruit, suspended in their own green heaven, 140
And thro' their veined leaves and amber stems
The flowers whose purple and translucent bowls
Stand ever mantling with ærial dew,
The drink of spirits: and it circles round,
Like the soft waving wings of noontday dreams, 145
Inspiring calm and happy thoughts, like mine,
Now thou art thus restored. This cave is thine.
Arise! Appear!

[*A Spirit rises in the likeness of a winged child.*

This is my torch-bearer ;
 Who let his lamp out in old time with gazing
 On eyes from which he kindled it anew 150
 With love, which is as fire, sweet daughter mine,
 For such is that within thine own. Run, wayward,
 And guide this company beyond the peak
 Of Bacchic Nysa, Mænad-haunted mountain,
 And beyond Indus and its tribute rivers, 155
 Trampling the torrent streams and glassy lakes
 With feet unwet, unwearied, undelaying,
 And up the green ravine, across the vale,
 Beside the windless and crystalline pool,
 Where ever lies, on unerasing waves, 160
 The image of a temple, built above,
 Distinct with column, arch, and architrave,
 And palm-like capital, and over-wrought,
 And populous most with living imagery,
 Praxitelean shapes, whose marble smiles 165
 Fill the hushed air with everlasting love.
 It is deserted now, but once it bore
 Thy name, Prometheus ; there the emulous youths
 Bore to thy honour thro' the divine gloom
 The lamp which was thine emblem ; even as those 170
 Who bear the untransmitted torch of hope
 Into the grave, across the night of life,
 As thou hast borne it most triumphantly
 To this far goal of Time. Depart, farewell.
 Beside that temple is the destined cave. 175

SCENE IV.

A FOREST. IN THE BACKGROUND A CAVE. PROMETHEUS, ASIA,
 PANTHEA, IONE, AND THE SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.

IONE.

Sister, it is not earthly : how it glides
 Under the leaves ! how on its head there burns
 A light, like a green star, whose emerald beams

Are twined with its fair hair! how, as it moves,
The splendour drops in flakes upon the grass! 5
Knowest thou it?

PANTHEA.

It is the delicate spirit
That guides the earth thro' heaven. From afar
The populous constellations call that light
The loveliest of the planets; and sometimes
It floats along the spray of the salt sea, 10
Or makes its chariot of a foggy cloud,
Or walks thro' fields or cities while men sleep,
Or o'er the mountain tops, or down the rivers,
Or thro' the green waste wilderness, as now,
Wondering at all it sees. Before Jove reigned 15
It loved our sister Asia, and it came
Each leisure hour to drink the liquid light
Out of her eyes, for which it said it thirsted
As one bit by a dipsas, and with her
It made its childish confidence, and told her 20
All it had known or seen, for it saw much,
Yet idly reasoned what it saw; and called her,
For whence it sprung it knew not, nor do I,
Mother, dear mother.

THE SPIRIT OF THE EARTH. (RUNNING TO ASIA.)

Mother, dearest mother;
May I then talk with thee as I was wont? 25
May I then hide my eyes in thy soft arms,
After thy looks have made them tired of joy?
May I then play beside thee the long noons,
When work is none in the bright silent air?

ASIA.

I love thee, gentlest being, and henceforth 30
Can cherish thee unenvied: speak, I pray:
Thy simple talk once solaced, now delights.

SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.

Mother, I am grown wiser, though a child
Cannot be wise like thee, within this day;
And happier too; happier and wiser both. 35
Thou knowest that toads, and snakes, and loathly worms,
And venomous and malicious beasts, and boughs

That bore ill berries in the woods, were ever
An hindrance to my walks o'er the green world:
And that, among the haunts of humankind, 40
Hard-featured men, or with proud, angry looks,
Or cold, staid gait, or false and hollow smiles,
Or the dull sneer of self-loved ignorance,
Or other such foul masks, with which ill thoughts
Hide that fair being whom we spirits call man; 45
And women too, ugliest of all things evil,
(Tho' fair, even in a world where thou art fair,
When good and kind, free and sincere like thee,)
When false or frowning made me sick at heart
To pass them, tho' they slept, and I unseen. 50
Well, my path lately lay thro' a great city
Into the woody hills surrounding it:
A sentinel was sleeping at the gate:
When there was heard a sound, so loud, it shook
The towers amid the moonlight, yet more sweet 55
Than any voice but thine, sweetest of all;
A long, long sound, as it would never end:
And all the inhabitants leapt suddenly
Out of their rest, and gathered in the streets,
Looking in wonder up to Heaven, while yet 60
The music pealed along. I hid myself
Within a fountain in the public square,
Where I lay like the reflex of the moon
Seen in a wave under green leaves; and soon
Those ugly human shapes and visages 65
Of which I spoke as having wrought me pain,
Past floating thro' the air, and fading still
Into the winds that scattered them; and those
From whom they past seemed mild and lovely forms
After some foul disguise had fallen, and all 70
Were somewhat changed, and after brief surprise
And greetings of delighted wonder, all
Went to their sleep again: and when the dawn
Came, would'st thou think that toads, and snakes, and efts,
Could e'er be beautiful? yet so they were, 75
And that with little change of shape or hue:
All things had put their evil nature off:

I cannot tell my joy, when o'er a lake
Upon a drooping bough with night-shade twined,
I saw two azure halcyons clinging downward 80
And thinning one bright bunch of amber berries,
With quick long beaks, and in the deep there lay
Those lovely forms imaged as in a sky;
So with my thoughts full of these happy changes,
We meet again, the happiest change of all. 85

ASIA.

And never will we part, till thy chaste sister
Who guides the frozen and inconstant moon
Will look on thy more warm and equal light
Till her heart thaw like flakes of April snow
And love thee.

SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.

What; as Asia loves Prometheus? 90

ASIA.

Peace, wanton, thou art yet not old enough.
Think ye by gazing on each other's eyes
To multiply your lovely selves, and fill
With spherèd fires the interlunar air?

SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.

Nay, mother, while my sister trims her lamp 95
'Tis hard I should go darkling.

ASIA.

Listen; look!

The SPIRIT OF THE HOUR enters.

PROMETHEUS.

We feel what thou hast heard and seen: yet speak.

SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.

Soon as the sound had ceased whose thunder filled
The abysses of the sky and the wide earth,
There was a change: the impalpable thin air 100
And the all-circling sunlight were transformed,
As if the sense of love dissolved in them
Had folded itself round the spherèd world.
My vision then grew clear, and I could see
Into the mysteries of the universe: 105
Dizzy as with delight I floated down,

Winnowing the lightsome air with languid plumes,
My coursers sought their birth-place in the sun,
Where they henceforth will live exempt from toil
Pasturing flowers of vegetable fire. 110
And where my moonlike car will stand within
A temple, gazed upon by Phidian forms
Of thee, and Asia, and the Earth, and me,
And you fair nymphs looking the love we feel;
In memory of the tidings it has borne; 115
Beneath a dome fretted with graven flowers,
Poised on twelve columns of resplendent stone,
And open to the bright and liquid sky.
Yoked to it by an amphisbenic snake
The likeness of those wingèd steeds will mock 120
The flight from which they find repose. Alas,
Whither has wandered now my partial tongue
When all remains untold which ye would hear?
As I have said I floated to the earth:
It was, as it is still, the pain of bliss 125
To move, to breathe, to be; I wandering went
Among the haunts and dwellings of mankind,
And first was disappointed not to see
Such mighty change as I had felt within
Expressed in outward things; but soon I looked, 130
And behold, thrones were kingless, and men walked
One with the other even as spirits do,
None fawned, none trampled; hate, disdain, or fear,
Self-love or self-contempt, on human brows,
No more inscribed, as o'er the gate of hell, 135
"All hope abandon ye who enter here;"
None frowned, none trembled, none with eager fear
Gazed on another's eye of cold command,
Until the subject of the tyrant's will
Became, worse fate, the abject of his own, 140
Which spurred him, like an outspent horse, to death.
None wrought his lips in truth-entangling lines
Which smiled the lie his tongue disdained to speak;
None, with firm sneer, trod out in his own heart
The sparks of love and hope till there remained 145
Those bitter ashes, a soul self-consumed,

And the wretch crept a vampire among men,
Infecting all with his own hideous ill;
None talked that common, false, cold, hollow talk
Which makes the heart deny the *yes* it breathes, 150
Yet question that unmeant hypocrisy
With such a self-mistrust as has no name.
And women, too, frank, beautiful, and kind
As the free heaven which rains fresh light and dew
On the wide earth, past; gentle radiant forms, 155
From custom's evil taint exempt and pure;
Speaking the wisdom once they could not think,
Looking emotions once they feared to feel,
And changed to all which once they dared not be,
Yet being now, made earth like heaven; nor pride, 160
Nor jealousy, nor envy, nor ill shame,
The bitterest of those drops of treasured gall,
Spoilt the sweet taste of the nepenthe, love.

Thrones, altars, judgment-seats, and prisons; wherein,
And beside which, by wretched men were borne 165
Sceptres, tiaras, swords, and chains, and tomes
Of reasoned wrong, glozed on by ignorance,
Were like those monstrous and barbaric shapes,
The ghosts of a no more remembered fame,
Which, from their unworn obelisks, look forth 170
In triumph o'er the palaces and tombs
Of those who were their conquerors: mouldering round
Those imaged to the pride of kings and priests,
A dark yet mighty faith, a power as wide
As is the world it wasted, and are now 175
But an astonishment; even so the tools
And emblems of its last captivity,
Amid the dwellings of the peopled earth,
Stand, not o'erthrown, but unregarded now.
And those foul shapes, abhorred by god and man, 180
Which, under many a name and many a form
Strange, savage, ghastly, dark and execrable,
Were Jupiter, the tyrant of the world;
And which the nations, panic-stricken, served
With blood, and hearts broken by long hope, and love

Dragged to his altars soiled and garlandless, 186
 And slain among men's unreclaiming tears,
 Flattering the thing they feared, which fear was hate,
 Frown, mouldering fast, o'er their abandoned shrines:
 The painted veil, by those who were, called life, 190
 Which mimicked, as with colours idly spread,
 All men believed and hoped, is torn aside;
 The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
 Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
 Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless, 195
 Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
 Over himself; just, gentle, wise: but man
 Passionless; no, yet free from guilt or pain,
 Which were, for his will made or suffered them,
 Nor yet exempt, tho' ruling them like slaves, 200
 From chance, and death, and mutability,
 The clogs of that which else might oversoar
 The loftiest star of unascended heaven,
 Pinnacled dim in the intense inane.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

SCENE, A PART OF THE FOREST NEAR THE CAVE OF PROMETHEUS.

PANTHEA AND IONE ARE SLEEPING: THEY AWAKEN GRADUALLY DURING THE FIRST SONG.

VOICE OF UNSEEN SPIRITS.

The pale stars are gone!
 For the sun, their swift shepherd,
 To their folds them compelling,
 In the depths of the dawn,
 Hastes, in meteor-eclipsing array, and they flee 5
 Beyond his blue dwelling,
 As fawns flee the leopard.
 But where are ye?

A TRAIN OF DARK FORMS AND SHADOWS PASSES BY CONFUSEDLY,
SINGING.

Here, oh, here:
We bear the bier 10
Of the Father of many a cancelled year!
Spectres we
Of the dead Hours be,
We bear Time to his tomb in eternity.

Strew, oh, strew 15
Hair, not yew!
Wet the dusty pall with tears, not dew!
Be the faded flowers
Of Death's bare bowers
Spread on the corpse of the King of Hours! 20

Haste, oh, haste!
As shades are chased,
Trembling, by day, from heaven's blue waste.
We melt away,
Like dissolving spray, 25
From the children of a diviner day,
With the lullaby
Of winds that die
On the bosom of their own harmony!

IONE.
What dark forms were they? 30

PANTHEA.
The past Hours weak and grey,
With the spoil which their toil
Raked together
From the conquest but One could foil.

IONE.
Have they past?

PANTHEA.
They have past; 35
They outspeeded the blast,
While 'tis said, they are fled:

IONE.
Whither, oh, whither?

PANTHEA.

To the dark, to the past, to the dead.

VOICE OF UNSEEN SPIRITS.

Bright clouds float in heaven, 40
 Dew-stars gleam on earth,
 Waves assemble on ocean,
 They are gathered and driven
 By the storm of delight, by the panic of glee!
 They shake with emotion, 45
 They dance in their mirth.
 But where are ye?

The pine boughs are singing
 Old songs with new gladness,
 The billows and fountains 50
 Fresh music are flinging,
 Like the notes of a spirit from land and from sea;
 The storms mock the mountains
 With the thunder of gladness.
 But where are ye? 55

IONE.

What charioteers are these?

PANTHEA.

Where are their chariots?

SEMICHORUS OF HOURS.

The voice of the Spirits of Air and of Earth
 Have drawn back the figured curtain of sleep
 Which covered our being and darkened our birth
 In the deep.

A VOICE.

In the deep?

SEMICHORUS II.

Oh, below the deep. 60

SEMICHORUS I.

An hundred ages we had been kept
 Cradled in visions of hate and care,
 And each one who waked as his brother slept,
 Found the truth—

SEMICHORUS II.

Worse than his visions were!

SEMICHORUS I.

We have heard the lute of Hope in sleep; 65
We have known the voice of Love in dreams,
We have felt the wand of Power, and leap—

SEMICHORUS II.

As the billows leap in the morning beams!

CHORUS.

Weave the dance on the floor of the breeze,
Pierce with song heaven's silent light, 70
Enchant the day that too swiftly flees,
To check its flight ere the cave of night.

Once the hungry Hours were hounds
Which chased the day like a bleeding deer,
And it limped and stumbled with many wounds 75
Through the nightly dells of the desert year.

But now, oh weave the mystic measure
Of music, and dance, and shapes of light,
Let the Hours, and the spirits of might and pleasure,
Like the clouds and sunbeams, unite.

A VOICE.

Unite! 80

PANTHEA.

See, where the Spirits of the human mind
Wrapt in sweet sounds, as in bright veils, approach.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS.

We join the throng
Of the dance and the song,
By the whirlwind of gladness borne along; 85
As the flying-fish leap
From the Indian deep,
And mix with the sea-birds, half asleep.

CHORUS OF HOURS.

Whence come ye, so wild and so fleet,
For sandals of lightning are on your feet, 90
And your wings are soft and swift as thought,
And your eyes are as love which is veiled not?

CHORUS OF SPIRITS.

We come from the mind
Of human kind
Which was late so dusk, and obscene, and blind, 95
Now 'tis an ocean
Of clear emotion,
A heaven of serene and mighty motion.

From that deep abyss
Of wonder and bliss, 100
Whose caverns are crystal palaces;
From those skiey towers
Where Thought's crowned powers
Sit watching your dance, ye happy Hours!

From the dim recesses 105
Of woven caresses,
Where lovers catch ye by your loose tresses;
From the azure isles,
Where sweet Wisdom smiles,
Delaying your ships with her syren wiles. 110

From the temples high
Of Man's ear and eye,
Roofed over Sculpture and Poesy;
From the murmurings
Of the unsealed springs 115
Where Science bedews his Dædal wings.

Years after years,
Through blood, and tears,
And a thick hell of hatreds, and hopes, and fears;
We waded and flew, 120
And the islets were few
Where the bud-blighted flowers of happiness grew.

Our feet now, every palm,
Are sandalled with calm,
And the dew of our wings is a rain of balm; 125
And, beyond our eyes,
The human love lies
Which makes all it gazes on Paradise.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS AND HOURS.

Then weave the web of the mystic measure;
From the depths of the sky and the ends of the earth,
Come, swift Spirits of might and of pleasure, 131
Fill the dance and the music of mirth,
As the waves of a thousand streams rush by
To an ocean of splendour and harmony!

CHORUS OF SPIRITS.

Our spoil is won, 135
Our task is done,
We are free to dive, or soar, or run;
Beyond and around,
Or within the bound
Which clips the world with darkness round. 140

We'll pass the eyes
Of the starry skies
Into the hoar deep to colonize:
Death, Chaos, and Night,
From the sound of our flight, 145
Shall flee, like mist from a tempest's might.

And Earth, Air, and Light,
And the Spirit of Might,
Which drives round the stars in their fiery flight;
And Love, Thought, and Breath, 150
The powers that quell Death,
Wherever we soar shall assemble beneath.

And our singing shall build
In the void's loose field
A world for the Spirit of Wisdom to wield; 155
We will take our plan
From the new world of man,
And our work shall be called the Promethean.

CHORUS OF HOURS.

Break the dance, and scatter the song;
Let some depart, and some remain. 160

SEMICHORUS I.

We, beyond heaven, are driven along:

SEMICHORUS II.

Us the enchantments of earth retain :

SEMICHORUS I.

Ceaseless, and rapid, and fierce, and free,
With the Spirits which build a new earth and sea,
And a heaven where yet heaven could never be. 165

SEMICHORUS II.

Solemn, and slow, and serene, and bright,
Leading the Day and outspeeding the Night,
With the powers of a world of perfect light.

SEMICHORUS I.

We whirl, singing loud, round the gathering sphere,
Till the trees, and the beasts, and the clouds appear 170
From its chaos made calm by love, not fear.

SEMICHORUS II.

We encircle the ocean and mountains of earth,
And the happy forms of its death and birth
Change to the music of our sweet mirth.

CHORUS OF HOURS AND SPIRITS.

Break the dance, and scatter the song, 175

Let some depart, and some remain,
Wherever we fly we lead along
In leashes, like starbeams, soft yet strong,
The clouds that are heavy with love's sweet rain.

PANTHEA.

Ha! they are gone!

IONE.

Yet feel you no delight 180
From the past sweetness?

PANTHEA.

As the bare green hill
When some soft cloud vanishes into rain,
Laughs with a thousand drops of sunny water
To the unpavilioned sky!

IONE.

Even whilst we speak
New notes arise. What is that awful sound? 185

PANTHEA.

'Tis the deep music of the rolling world

Kindling within the strings of the waved air,
Æolian modulations.

IONE.

Listen too,

How every pause is filled with under-notes,
Clear, silver, icy, keen awakening tones, 190
Which pierce the sense, and live within the soul,
As the sharp stars pierce winter's crystal air
And gaze upon themselves within the sea.

PANTHEA.

But see where through two openings in the forest
Which hanging branches overcanopy, 195
And where two runnels of a rivulet,
Between the close moss violet-inwoven,
Have made their path of melody, like sisters
Who part with sighs that they may meet in smiles,
Turning their dear disunion to an isle 200
Of lovely grief, a wood of sweet sad thoughts;
Two visions of strange radiance float upon
The ocean-like enchantment of strong sound,
Which flows intenser, keener, deeper yet
Under the ground and through the windless air. 205

IONE.

I see a chariot like that thinnest boat,
In which the mother of the months is borne
By ebbing night into her western cave,
When she upsprings from interlunar dreams,
O'er which is curved an orblike canopy 210
Of gentle darkness, and the hills and woods
Distinctly seen through that dusk airy veil,
Regard like shapes in an enchanter's glass;
Its wheels are solid clouds, azure and gold,
Such as the genii of the thunder-storm 215
Pile on the floor of the illumined sea
When the sun rushes under it; they roll
And move and grow as with an inward wind;
Within it sits a wingèd infant, white
Its countenance, like the whiteness of bright snow, 220
Its plumes are as feathers of sunny frost,
Its limbs gleam white, through the wind-flowing folds

Of its white robe, woof of ætherial pearl.
 Its hair is white, the brightness of white light
 Scattered in strings; yet its two eyes are heavens 225
 Of liquid darkness, which the Deity
 Within seems pouring, as a storm is poured
 From jagged clouds, out of their arrowy lashes,
 - Tempering the cold and radiant air around,
 With fire that is not brightness; in its hand 230
 It sways a quivering moon-beam, from whose point
 A guiding power directs the chariot's prow
 Over its wheelèd clouds, which as they roll
 Over the grass, and flowers, and waves, wake sounds,
 Sweet as a singing rain of silver dew. 235

PANTHEA.

And from the other opening in the wood
 Rushes, with loud and whirlwind harmony,
 A sphere, which is as many thousand spheres,
 Solid as crystal, yet through all its mass
 Flow, as through empty space, music and light: 240
 Ten thousand orbs involving and involved,
 Purple and azure, white, and green, and golden,
 Sphere within sphere; and every space between
 Peopled with unimaginable shapes,
 Such as ghosts dream dwell in the lampless deep, 245
 Yet each inter-transparent, and they whirl
 Over each other with a thousand motions,
 Upon a thousand sightless axles spinning,
 And with the force of self-destroying swiftness,
 Intensely, slowly, solemnly roll on, 250
 Kindling with mingled sounds, and many tones,
 Intelligible words and music wild.
 With mighty whirl the multitudinous orb
 Grinds the bright brook into an azure mist
 Of elemental subtlety, like light; 255
 And the wild odour of the forest flowers,
 The music of the living grass and air,
 The emerald light of leaf-entangled beams
 Round its intense yet self-conflicting speed,
 Seem kneaded into one aerial mass 260
 Which drowns the sense. Within the orb itself,

Pillowed upon its alabaster arms,
Like to a child o'erwearied with sweet toil,
On its own folded wings, and wavy hair,
The Spirit of the Earth is laid asleep, 265
And you can see its little lips are moving,
Amid the changing light of their own smiles,
Like one who talks of what he loves in dream.

IONE.

'Tis only mocking the orb's harmony.

PANTHEA.

And from a star upon its forehead, shoot, 270
Like swords of azure fire, or golden spears
With tyrant-quelling myrtle overtwin'd,
Embleming heaven and earth united now,
Vast beams like spokes of some invisible wheel
Which whirl as the orb whirls, swifter than thought, 275
Filling the abyss with sun-like lightnings,
And perpendicular now, and now transverse,
Pierce the dark soil, and as they pierce and pass,
Make bare the secrets of the earth's deep heart;
Infinite mine of adamant and gold, 280
Valueless stones, and unimagined gems,
And caverns on crystalline columns poised
With vegetable silver overspread;
Wells of unfathomed fire, and water springs
Whence the great sea, even as a child is fed, 285
Whose vapours clothe earth's monarch mountain-tops
With kingly, ermine snow. The beams flash on
And make appear the melancholy ruins
Of cancelled cycles; anchors, beaks of ships;
Planks turned to marble; quivers, helms, and spears, 290
And gorgon-headed targes, and the wheels
Of scythed chariots, and the emblazonry
Of trophies, standards, and armorial beasts,
Round which death laughed, sepulchred emblems
Of dead destruction, ruin within ruin! 295
The wrecks beside of many a city vast,
Whose population which the earth grew over
Was mortal, but not human; see, they lie,
Their monstrous works, and uncouth skeletons,

Their statues, homes and fanes; prodigious shapes 300
 Huddled in grey annihilation, split,
 Jammed in the hard, black deep; and over these,
 The anatomies of unknown winged things,
 And fishes which were isles of living scale,
 And serpents, bony chains, twisted around 305
 The iron crags, or within heaps of dust
 To which the tortuous strength of their last pangs
 Had crushed the iron crags; and over these
 The jagged alligator, and the might
 Of earth-convulsing behemoth, which once 310
 Were monarch beasts, and on the slimy shores,
 And weed-overgrown continents of earth,
 Increased and multiplied like summer worms
 On an abandoned corpse, till the blue globe
 Wrapt deluge round it like a cloke, and they 315
 Yelled, gasped, and were abolished; or some God
 Whose throne was in a comet, past, and cried,
 Be not! And like my words they were no more.

THE EARTH.

The joy, the triumph, the delight, the madness!
 The boundless, overflowing, bursting gladness, 320
 The vapourous exultation not to be confined!
 Ha! ha! the animation of delight
 Which wraps me, like an atmosphere of light,
 And bears me as a cloud is borne by its own wind.

THE MOON.

Brother mine, calm wanderer, 325
 Happy globe of land and air,
 Some Spirit is darted like a beam from thee,
 Which penetrates my frozen frame,
 And passes with the warmth of flame,
 With love, and odour, and deep melody 330
 Through me, through me!

THE EARTH.

Ha! ha! the caverns of my hollow mountains,
 My cloven fire-crags, sound-exulting fountains
 Laugh with a vast and inextinguishable laughter.
 The oceans, and the desarts, and the abysses, 335
 And the deep air's unmeasured wildernesses,
 Answer from all their clouds and billows, echoing after.

They cry aloud as I do. Sceptred curse,
Who all our green and azure universe
Threatenedst to muffle round with black destruction, sending
A solid cloud to rain hot thunder-stones, 341
And splinter and knead down my children's bones,
All I bring forth, to one void mass battering and blending.

Until each crag-like tower, and storied column,
Palace, and obelisk, and temple solemn, 345
My imperial mountains crowned with cloud, and snow, and fire;
My sea-like forests, every blade and blossom
Which finds a grave or cradle in my bosom,
Were stamped by thy strong hate into a lifeless mire.

How art thou sunk, withdrawn, covered, drunk up
By thirsty nothing, as the brackish cup 351
Drained by a desert-troop, a little drop for all;
And from beneath, around, within, above,
Filling thy void annihilation, love
Burst in like light on caves cloven by the thunder-ball.

THE MOON.

The snow upon my lifeless mountains 356
Is loosened into living fountains,
My solid oceans flow, and sing, and shine:
A spirit from my heart bursts forth,
It clothes with unexpected birth 360
My cold bare bosom: Oh! it must be thine
On mine, on mine!

Gazing on thee I feel, I know
Green stalks burst forth, and bright flowers grow,
And living shapes upon my bosom move: 365
Music is in the sea and air,
Wingèd clouds soar here and there,
Dark with the rain new buds are dreaming of:
'Tis love, all love!

THE EARTH.

It interpenetrates my granite mass, 370
Through tangled roots and trodden clay doth pass,
Into the utmost leaves and delicatest flowers;

Upon the winds, among the clouds 'tis spread,
It wakes a life in the forgotten dead,
They breathe a spirit up from their obscurest bowers. 375

And like a storm bursting its cloudy prison
With thunder, and with whirlwind, has arisen
Out of the lampless caves of unimagined being:
With earthquake shock and swiftness making shiver
Thought's stagnant chaos, unremoved for ever, 380
Till hate, and fear, and pain, light-vanquished shadows, fleeing,

Leave Man, who was a many sided mirror,
Which could distort to many a shape of error,
This true fair world of things, a sea reflecting love;
Which over all his kind as the sun's heaven 385
Gliding o'er ocean, smooth, serene, and even
Darting from starry depths radiance and life, doth move,

Leave Man, even as a leprous child is left,
Who follows a sick beast to some warm cleft
Of rocks, through which the might of healing springs is
poured; 390
Then when it wanders home with rosy smile,
Unconscious, and its mother fears awhile
It is a spirit, then, weeps on her child restored.

Man, oh, not men! a chain of linkèd thought,
Of love and might to be divided not, 395
Compelling the elements with adamant stress;
As the sun rules, even with a tyrant's gaze,
The unquiet republic of the maze
Of planets, struggling fierce towards heaven's free wilderness.

Man, one harmonious soul of many a soul, 400
Whose nature is its own divine controul,
Where all things flow to all, as rivers to the sea;
Familiar acts are beautiful through love;
Labour, and pain, and grief, in life's green grove
Sport like tame beasts, none knew how gentle they could be!

His will, with all mean passions, bad delights,
And selfish cares, its trembling satellites, 407
A spirit ill to guide, but mighty to obey,
Is as a tempest-wingèd ship, whose helm
Love rules, through waves which dare not overwhelm,
Forcing life's wildest shores to own its sovereign sway.

All things confess his strength. Through the cold mass
Of marble and of colour his dreams pass;
Bright threads whence mothers weave the robes their chil-
dren wear;
Language is a perpetual orphic song, 415
Which rules with Dædal harmony a throng
Of thoughts and forms, which else senseless and shapeless were.

The lightning is his slave; heaven's utmost deep
Gives up her stars, and like a flock of sheep
They pass before his eye, are numbered, and roll on! 420
The tempest is his steed, he strides the air;
And the abyss shouts from her depth laid bare,
Heaven, hast thou secrets? Man unveils me; I have none.

THE MOON.

The shadow of white death has past
From my path in heaven at last, 425
A clinging shroud of solid frost and sleep;
And through my newly-woven bowers,
Wander happy paramours,
Less mighty, but as mild as those who keep
Thy vales more deep. 430

THE EARTH.

As the dissolving warmth of dawn may fold
A half unfrozen dew-globe, green, and gold,
And crystalline, till it becomes a wingèd mist,
And wanders up the vault of the blue day,
Outlives the noon, and on the sun's last ray 435
Hangs o'er the sea, a fleece of fire and amethyst.

THE MOON.

Thou art folded, thou art lying
In the light which is undying
Of thine own joy, and heaven's smile divine;

All suns and constellations shower 440
On thee a light, a life, a power
Which doth array thy sphere; thou pourest thine
On mine, on mine!

THE EARTH.

I spin beneath my pyramid of night,
Which points into the heavens dreaming delight, 445
Murmuring victorious joy in my enchanted sleep;
As a youth lulled in love-dreams faintly sighing,
Under the shadow of his beauty lying,
Which round his rest a watch of light and warmth doth keep.

THE MOON.

As in the soft and sweet eclipse, 450
When soul meets soul on lovers' lips,
High hearts are calm, and brightest eyes are dull;
So when thy shadow falls on me,
Then am I mute and still, by thee
Covered; of thy love, Orb most beautiful, 455
Full, oh, too full!

Thou art speeding round the sun
Brightest world of many a one;
Green and azure sphere which shinest 460
With a light which is divinest
Among all the lamps of Heaven
To whom life and light is given;
I, thy crystal paramour
Borne beside thee by a power
Like the polar Paradise, 465
Magnet-like of lovers' eyes;
I, a most enamoured maiden
Whose weak brain is overladen
With the pleasure of her love,
Maniac-like around thee move 470
Gazing, an insatiate bride,
On thy form from every side
Like a Mænad, round the cup
Which Agave lifted up
In the weird Cadmæan forest. 475
Brother, wheresoe'er thou soarest

I must hurry, whirl and follow
 Through the heavens wide and hollow,
 Sheltered by the warm embrace
 Of thy soul from hungry space, 480
 Drinking from thy sense and sight
 Beauty, majesty, and might,
 As a lover or a cameleon
 Grows like what it looks upon,
 As a violet's gentle eye 485
 Gazes on the azure sky
 Until its hue grows like what it beholds,
 As a grey and watery mist
 Glows like solid amethyst
 Athwart the western mountain it enfolds, 490
 When the sunset sleeps
 Upon its snow.

THE EARTH.

And the weak day weeps
 That it should be so.
 Oh, gentle Moon, the voice of thy delight 495
 Falls on me like thy clear and tender light
 Soothing the seaman, borne the summer night,
 Through isles for ever calm;
 Oh, gentle Moon, thy crystal accents pierce
 The caverns of my pride's deep universe, 500
 Charming the tiger joy, whose trappings fierce
 Made wounds which need thy balm.

PANTHEA.

I rise as from a bath of sparkling water,
 A bath of azure light, among dark rocks,
 Out of the stream of sound.

IONE.

Ah me! sweet sister,
 The stream of sound has ebbed away from us, 505
 And you pretend to rise out of its wave,
 Because your words fall like the clear, soft dew
 Shaken from a bathing wood-nymph's limbs and hair.

PANTHEA.

Peace! peace! A mighty Power, which is as darkness,
 Is rising out of Earth, and from the sky 511

Is showered like night, and from within the air
 Bursts, like eclipse which had been gathered up
 Into the pores of sunlight: the bright visions,
 Wherein the singing spirits rode and shone, 515
 Gleam like pale meteors through a watery night.

IONE.

There is a sense of words upon mine ear.

PANTHEA.

An universal sound like words: Oh, list!

DEMOGORGON.

Thou, Earth, calm empire of a happy soul,
 Sphere of divinest shapes and harmonies, 520
 Beautiful orb! gathering as thou dost roll
 The love which paves thy path along the skies:

THE EARTH.

I hear: I am as a drop of dew that dies.

DEMOGORGON.

Thou, Moon, which gazest on the nightly Earth
 With wonder, as it gazes upon thee; 525
 Whilst each to men, and beasts, and the swift birth
 Of birds, is beauty, love, calm, harmony:

THE MOON.

I hear: I am a leaf shaken by thee!

DEMOGORGON.

Ye kings of suns and stars, Dæmons and Gods,
 Ætherial Dominations, who possess 531
 Elysian, windless, fortunate abodes
 Beyond Heaven's constellated wilderness:

A VOICE FROM ABOVE.

Our great Republic hears, we are blest, and bless.

DEMOGORGON.

Ye happy dead, whom beams of brightest verse
 Are clouds to hide, not colours to pourtray, 535
 Whether your nature is that universe
 Which once ye saw and suffered—

A VOICE FROM BENEATH.

Or as they
 Whom we have left, we change and pass away.

DEMOGORGON.

Ye elemental Genii, who have homes
From man's high mind even to the central stone 540
Of sullen lead; from Heaven's star-fretted domes
To the dull weed some sea-worm battens on:

A CONFUSED VOICE.

We hear: thy words waken Oblivion.

DEMOGORGON.

Spirits, whose homes are flesh: ye beasts and birds, 545
Ye worms, and fish; ye living leaves and buds;
Lightning and wind; and ye untameable herds,
Meteors and mists, which throng air's solitudes:

A VOICE.

Thy voice to us is wind among still woods.

DEMOGORGON.

Man, who wert once a despot and a slave;
A dupe and a deceiver; a decay; 550
A traveller from the cradle to the grave
Through the dim night of this immortal day:

ALL.

Speak: thy strong words may never pass away.

DEMOGORGON.

This is the day, which down the void abyss
At the Earth-born's spell yawns for Heaven's despotism, 555
And Conquest is dragged captive through the deep:
Love, from its awful throne of patient power
In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour
Of dead endurance, from the slippery, steep,
And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs 560
And folds over the world its healing wings.

Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,
These are the seals of that most firm assurance

Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength;
And if, with infirm hand, Eternity, 565
Mother of many acts and hours, should free

The serpent that would clasp her with his length;
These are the spells by which to re-assume
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite; 570
 To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
 To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
 To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
 From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
 Neither to change, nor faulter, nor repent; 575
 This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
 Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
 This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

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THE SENSITIVE PLANT.

PART FIRST.

A SENSITIVE Plant in a garden grew,
 And the young winds fed it with silver dew,
 And it opened its fan-like leaves to the light,
 And closed them beneath the kisses of night.

And the Spring arose on the garden fair, 5
 Like the Spirit of Love felt every where;
 And each flower and herb on Earth's dark breast
 Rose from the dreams of its wintry rest.

But none ever trembled and panted with bliss
 In the garden, the field, or the wilderness, 10
 Like a doe in the noon-tide with love's sweet want,
 As the companionless Sensitive Plant.

The snow-drop, and then the violet,
 Arose from the ground with warm rain wet,
 And their breath was mixed with fresh odour, sent 15
 From the turf, like the voice and the instrument.

Then the pied wind-flowers and the tulip tall,
And narcissi, the fairest among them all,
Who gaze on their eyes in the stream's recess,
Till they die of their own dear loveliness; 20

And the Naiad-like lily of the vale,
Whom youth makes so fair and passion so pale,
That the light of its tremulous bells is seen
Through their pavilions of tender green;

And the hyacinth purple, and white, and blue, 25
Which flung from its bells a sweet peal anew
Of music so delicate, soft, and intense,
It was felt like an odour within the sense;

And the rose like a nymph to the bath address,
Which unveiled the depth of her glowing breast, 30
Till, fold after fold, to the fainting air
The soul of her beauty and love lay bare:

And the wand-like lily, which lifted up,
As a Mænad, its moonlight-coloured cup,
Till the fiery star, which is its eye, 35
Gazed through clear dew on the tender sky;

And the jessamine faint, and the sweet tuberose,
The sweetest flower for scent that blows;
And all rare blossoms from every clime
Grew in that garden in perfect prime. 40

And on the stream whose inconstant bosom
Was pranked under boughs of embowering blossom,
With golden and green light, slanting through
Their heaven of many a tangled hue,

Broad water lilies lay tremulously, 45
And starry river-buds glimmered by,
And around them the soft stream did glide and dance
With a motion of sweet sound and radiance.

And the sinuous paths of lawn and of moss,
Which led through the garden along and across, 50
Some open at once to the sun and the breeze,
Some lost among bowers of blossoming trees,

Were all paved with daisies and delicate bells
As fair as the fabulous asphodels,
And flowrets which drooping as day drooped too 55
Fell into pavilions, white, purple, and blue,
To roof the glow-worm from the evening dew.

And from this undefiled Paradise
The flowers (as an infant's awakening eyes
Smile on its mother, whose singing sweet 60
Can first lull, and at last must awaken it,)

When Heaven's blithe winds had unfolded them,
As mine-lamps enkindle a hidden gem,
Shone smiling to Heaven, and every one
Shared joy in the light of the gentle sun; 65

For each one was interpenetrated
With the light and the odour its neighbour shed,
Like young lovers whom youth and love make dear
Wrapped and filled by their mutual atmosphere.

But the Sensitive Plant which could give small fruit 70
Of the love which it felt from the leaf to the root,
Received more than all, it loved more than ever,
Where none wanted but it, could belong to the giver,

For the Sensitive Plant has no bright flower;
Radiance and odour are not its dower; 75
It loves, even like Love, its deep heart is full,
It desires what it has not, the beautiful!

The light winds which from unsustaining wings
Shed the music of many murmurings;
The beams which dart from many a star 80
Of the flowers whose hues they bear afar;

The plumèd insects swift and free,
Like golden boats on a sunny sea,
Laden with light and odour, which pass
Over the gleam of the living grass ; 85

The unseen clouds of the dew, which lie
Like fire in the flowers till the sun rides high,
Then wander like spirits among the spheres,
Each cloud faint with the fragrance it bears ;

The quivering vapours of dim noontide, 90
Which like a sea o'er the warm earth glide,
In which every sound, and odour, and beam,
Move, as reeds in a single stream ;

Each and all like ministering angels were
For the Sensitive Plant sweet joy to bear, 95
Whilst the lagging hours of the day went by
Like windless clouds o'er a tender sky.

And when evening descended from heaven above,
And the Earth was all rest, and the air was all love,
And delight, tho' less bright, was far more deep, 100
And the day's veil fell from the world of sleep,

And the beasts, and the birds, and the insects were drowned
In an ocean of dreams without a sound ;
Whose waves never mark, tho' they ever impress
The light sand which paves it, consciousness ; 105

(Only over head the sweet nightingale
Ever sang more sweet as the day might fail,
And snatches of its Elysian chant
Were mixed with the dreams of the Sensitive Plant.)

The Sensitive Plant was the earliest 110
Up-gathered into the bosom of rest ;
A sweet child weary of its delight,
The feeblest and yet the favourite,
Cradled within the embrace of night.

PART SECOND.

There was a Power in this sweet place,
 An Eve in this Eden; a ruling grace
 Which to the flowers did they waken or dream,
 Was as God is to the starry scheme.

A Lady, the wonder of her kind, 5
 Whose form was upborne by a lovely mind
 Which, dilating, had moulded her mien and motion
 Like a sea-flower unfolded beneath the ocean,

Tended the garden from morn to even:
 And the meteors of that sublunar heaven, 10
 Like the lamps of the air when night walks forth,
 Laughed round her footsteps up from the Earth!

She had no companion of mortal race,
 But her tremulous breath and her flushing face
 Told, whilst the morn kissed the sleep from her eyes
 That her dreams were less slumber than Paradise: 15

As if some bright Spirit for her sweet sake
 Had deserted heaven while the stars were awake,
 As if yet around her he lingering were,
 Tho' the veil of daylight concealed him from her. 20

Her step seemed to pity the grass it prest;
 You might hear by the heaving of her breast,
 That the coming and going of the wind
 Brought pleasure there and left passion behind.

And wherever her airy footstep trod, 25
 Her trailing hair from the grassy sod
 Erased its light vestige, with shadowy sweep,
 Like a sunny storm o'er the dark green deep.

I doubt not the flowers of that garden sweet
 Rejoiced in the sound of her gentle feet; 30
 I doubt not they felt the spirit that came
 From her glowing fingers thro' all their frame.

She sprinkled bright water from the stream
On those that were faint with the sunny beam;
And out of the cups of the heavy flowers
She emptied the rain of the thunder showers. 85

She lifted their heads with her tender hands,
And sustained them with rods and ozier bands;
If the flowers had been her own infants she
Could never have nursed them more tenderly. 40

And all killing insects and gnawing worms,
And things of obscene and unlovely forms,
She bore in a basket of Indian woof,
Into the rough woods far aloof,

In a basket, of grasses and wild flowers full, 45
The freshest her gentle hands could pull
For the poor banished insects, whose intent,
Although they did ill, was innocent.

But the bee and the beamlike ephemeris
Whose path is the lightning's, and soft moths that kiss 50
The sweet lips of the flowers, and harm not, did she
Make her attendant angels be.

And many an antenatal tomb,
Where butterflies dream of the life to come,
She left clinging round the smooth and dark 55
Edge of the odorous cedar bark.

This fairest creature from earliest spring
Thus moved through the garden ministering
All the sweet season of summer tide,
And ere the first leaf looked brown—she died! 60

PART THIRD.

Three days the flowers of the garden fair,
Like stars when the moon is awakened, were,
Or the waves of Baiæ, ere luminous
She floats up through the smoke of Vesuvius,

And on the fourth, the Sensitive Plant 5
 Felt the sound of the funeral chaunt,
 And the steps of the bearers, heavy and slow,
 And the sobs of the mourners deep and low;

The weary sound and the heavy breath,
 And the silent motions of passing death, 10
 And the smell, cold, oppressive, and dank,
 Sent through the pores of the coffin plank;

The dark grass, and the flowers among the grass,
 Were bright with tears as the crowd did pass;
 From their sighs the wind caught a mournful tone, 15
 And sate in the pines, and gave groan for groan.

The garden, once fair, became cold and foul,
 Like the corpse of her who had been its soul,
 Which at first was lovely as if in sleep,
 Then slowly changed, till it grew a heap 20
 To make men tremble who never weep.

Swift summer into the autumn flowed,
 And frost in the mist of the morning rode,
 Though the noonday sun looked clear and bright,
 Mocking the spoil of the secret night. 25

The rose leaves, like flakes of crimson snow,
 Paved the turf and the moss below.
 The lilies were drooping, and white, and wau,
 Like the head and the skin of a dying man.

And Indian plants, of scent and hue 30
 The sweetest that ever were fed on dew,
 Leaf after leaf, day after day,
 Were massed into the common clay.

And the leaves, brown, yellow, and grey, and red,
 And white with the whiteness of what is dead, 35
 Like troops of ghosts on the dry wind past;
 Their whistling noise made the birds aghast.

And the gusty winds waked the wingèd seeds,
Out of their birthplace of ugly weeds,
Till they clung round many a sweet flower's stem, 40
Which rotted into the earth with them.

The water-blooms under the rivulet
Fell from the stalks on which they were set;
And the eddies drove them here and there,
As the winds did those of the upper air. 45

Then the rain came down, and the broken stalks,
Were bent and tangled across the walks;
And the leafless net-work of parasite bowers
Massed into ruin; and all sweet flowers.

Between the time of the wind and the snow, 50
All loathliest weeds began to grow,
Whose coarse leaves were splashed with many a speck,
Like the water-snake's belly and the toad's back.

And thistles, and nettles, and darnels rank,
And the dock, and henbane, and hemlock dank, 55
Stretched out its long and hollow shank,
And stifled the air till the dead wind stank.

And plants, at whose names the verse feels loath,
Filled the place with a monstrous undergrowth,
Prickly, and pulpous, and blistering, and blue, 60
Livid, and starred with a lurid dew.

And agarics, and fungi, with mildew and mould
Started like mist from the wet ground cold;
Pale, fleshy, as if the decaying dead
With a spirit of growth had been animated! 65

Their moss rotted off them, flake by flake,
Till the thick stalk stuck like a murderer's stake,
Where rags of loose flesh yet tremble on high,
Infecting the winds that wander by.

Spawn, weeds, and filth, a leprous scum, 70
 Made the running rivulet thick and dumb
 And at its outlet flags huge as stakes
 Dammed it up with roots knotted like water snakes.

And hour by hour, when the air was still,
 The vapours arose which have strength to kill: 75
 At morn they were seen, at noon they were felt,
 At night they were darkness no star could melt.

And unctuous meteors from spray to spray
 Crept and flitted in broad noon-day
 Unseen; every branch on which they alit 80
 By a venomous blight was burned and bit.

The Sensitive Plant like one forbid
 Wept, and the tears within each lid
 Of its folded leaves which together grew
 Were changed to a blight of frozen glue. 85

For the leaves soon fell, and the branches soon
 By the heavy axe of the blast were hewn;
 The sap shrank to the root through every pore
 As blood to a heart that will beat no more.

For Winter came: the wind was his whip: 90
 One choppy finger was on his lip:
 He had torn the cataracts from the hills
 And they clanked at his girdle like manacles;

His breath was a chain which without a sound
 The earth, and the air, and the water bound; 95
 He came, fiercely driven, in his chariot-throne
 By the tenfold blasts of the arctic zone.

Then the weeds which were forms of living death
 Fled from the frost to the earth beneath.
 Their decay and sudden flight from frost 100
 Was but like the vanishing of a ghost!

And under the roots of the Sensitive Plant
The moles and the dormice died for want:
The birds dropped stiff from the frozen air
And were caught in the branches naked and bare. 105

First there came down a thawing rain
And its dull drops froze on the boughs again,
Then there steamed up a freezing dew
Which to the drops of the thaw-rain grew;

And a northern whirlwind, wandering about 110
Like a wolf that had smelt a dead child out,
Shook the boughs thus laden, and heavy and stiff,
And snapped them off with his rigid griff.

When winter had gone and spring came back
The Sensitive Plant was a leafless wreck; 115
But the mandrakes, and toadstools, and docks, and darnels,
Rose like the dead from their ruined charnels.

CONCLUSION.

Whether the Sensitive Plant, or that
Which within its boughs like a spirit sat
Ere its outward form had known decay,
Now felt this change, I cannot say.

Whether that lady's gentle mind, 5
No longer with the form combined
Which scattered love, as stars do light,
Found sadness, where it left delight,

I dare not guess; but in this life
Of error, ignorance, and strife, 10
Where nothing is, but all things seem,
And we the shadows of the dream,

It is a modest creed, and yet
Pleasant if one considers it,
To own that death itself must be, 15
Like all the rest, a mockery.

That garden sweet, that lady fair,
 And all sweet shapes and odours there,
 In truth have never past away:
 'Tis we, 'tis ours, are changed; not they.

20

For love, and beauty, and delight,
 There is no death nor change: their might
 Exceeds our organs, which endure
 No light, being themselves obscure.

A VISION OF THE SEA.

'Tis the terror of tempest. The rags of the sail
 Are flickering in ribbons within the fierce gale:
 From the stark night of vapours the dim rain is driven,
 And when lightning is loosed, like a deluge from heaven,
 She sees the black trunks of the water-spouts spin, 5
 And bend, as if heaven was ruining in,
 Which they seemed to sustain with their terrible mass
 As if ocean had sank from beneath them: they pass
 To their graves in the deep with an earthquake of sound,
 And the waves and the thunders made silent around 10
 Leave the wind to its echo. The vessel, now tossed
 Through the low-trailing rack of the tempest, is lost
 In the skirts of the thunder-cloud: now down the sweep
 Of the wind-cloven wave to the chasm of the deep
 It sinks, and the walls of the watery vale 15
 Whose depths of dread calm are unmoved by the gale,
 Dim mirrors of ruin hang gleaming about;
 While the surf, like a chaos of stars, like a rout
 Of death-flames, like whirlpools of fire-flowing iron
 With splendour and terror the black ship environ, 20
 Or like sulphur-flakes hurled from a mine of pale fire
 In fountains spout o'er it. In many a spire
 The pyramid-billows with white points of brine
 In the cope of the lightning inconstantly shine,
 As piercing the sky from the floor of the sea. 25
 The great ship seems splitting! it cracks as a tree,

While an earthquake is splintering its root, ere the blast
Of the whirlwind that stripped it of branches has past.
The intense thunder-balls which are raining from heaven
Have shattered its mast, and it stands black and riven.
The chinks suck destruction. The heavy dead hulk 31
On the living sea rolls an inanimate bulk,
Like a corpse on the clay which is hungering to fold
Its corruption around it. Meanwhile, from the hold,
One deck is burst up from the waters below, 35
And it splits like the ice when the thaw-breezes blow
O'er the lakes of the desert! Who sit on the other?
Is that all the crew that lie burying each other,
Like the dead in a breach, round the foremast? Are those
Twin tigers, who burst, when the waters arose, 40
In the agony of terror, their chains in the hold;
(What now makes them tame, is what then made them bold;)
Who crouch, side by side, and have driven, like a crank,
The deep grip of their claws through the vibrating plank.
Are these all? Nine weeks the tall vessel had lain 45
On the windless expanse of the watery plain,
Where the death-darting sun cast no shadow at noon,
And there seemed to be fire in the beams of the moon,
Till a lead-coloured fog gathered up from the deep 49
Whose breath was quick pestilence; then, the cold sleep
Crept, like blight through the ears of a thick field of corn,
O'er the populous vessel. And even and morn,
With their hammocks for coffins the seamen aghast
Like dead men the dead limbs of their comrades cast 54
Down the deep, which closed on them above and around,
And the sharks and the dog-fish their grave-clothes unbound,
And were glutted like Jews with this manna rained down
From God on their wilderness. One after one
The mariners died; on the eve of this day,
When the tempest was gathering in cloudy array, 60
But seven remained. Six the thunder has smitten,
And they lie black as mummies on which Time has written
His scorn of the embalmer; the seventh, from the deck
An oak-splinter pierced through his breast and his back,
And hung out to the tempest, a wreck on the wreck. 65
No more? At the helm sits a woman more fair

Than heaven, when, unbinding its star-braided hair,
 It sinks with the sun on the earth and the sea.
 She clasps a bright child on her upgathered knee, 69
 It laughs at the lightning, it mocks the mixed thunder
 Of the air and the sea, with desire and with wonder
 It is beckoning the tigers to rise and come near,
 It would play with those eyes where the radiance of fear
 Is outshining the meteors; its bosom beats high,
 The heart-fire of pleasure has kindled its eye; 75
 Whilst its mother's is lustreless. "Smile not, my child,
 "But sleep deeply and sweetly, and so be beguiled
 "Of the pang that awaits us, whatever that be,
 "So dreadful since thou must divide it with me!
 "Dream, sleep! This pale bosom, thy cradle and bed, 80
 "Will it rock thee not, infant? 'Tis beating with dread!
 "Alas! what is life, what is death, what are we,
 "That when the ship sinks we no longer may be?
 "What! to see thee no more, and to feel thee no more?
 "To be after life what we have been before? 85
 "Not to touch those sweet hands? Not to look on those eyes,
 "Those lips, and that hair, all that smiling disguise
 "Thou yet wearest, sweet spirit, which I, day by day,
 "Have so long called my child, but which now fades away
 "Like a rainbow, and I the fallen shower?" Lo! the ship
 Is settling, it topples, the leeward ports dip; 91
 The tigers leap up when they feel the slow brine
 Crawling inch by inch on them, hair, ears, limbs, and eyne,
 Stand rigid with horror; a loud, long, hoarse cry
 Bursts at once from their vitals tremendously, 95
 And 'tis borne down the mountainous vale of the wave,
 Rebounding, like thunder, from crag to cave,
 Mixed with the clash of the lashing rain,
 Hurried on by the might of the hurricane:
 The hurricane came from the west, and past on 100
 By the path of the gate of the eastern sun,
 Transversely dividing the stream of the storm;
 As an arrowy serpent, pursuing the form
 Of an elephant, bursts through the brakes of the waste.
 Black as a cormorant the screaming blast, 105
 Between ocean and heaven, like an ocean, past,

Till it came to the clouds on the verge of the world
Which, based on the sea and to heaven upcurled,
Like columns and walls did surround and sustain
The dome of the tempest; it rent them in twain, 110
As a flood rends its barriers of mountainous crag:
And the dense clouds in many a ruin and rag,
Like the stones of a temple ere earthquake has past,
Like the dust of its fall, on the whirlwind are cast; 114
They are scattered like foam on the torrent; and where
The wind has burst out from the chasm, from the air
Of clear morning, the beams of the sunrise flow in,
Unimpeded, keen, golden, and crystalline,
Banded armies of light and of air; at one gate
They encounter, but interpenetrate. 120
And that breach in the tempest is widening away,
And the caverns of cloud are torn up by the day,
And the fierce winds are sinking with weary wings
Lulled by the motion and murmurings,
And the long glassy heave of the rocking sea, 125
And over head glorious, but dreadful to see
The wrecks of the tempest, like vapours of gold,
Are consuming in sunrise. The heaped waves behold
The deep calm of blue heaven dilating above, 129
And, like passions made still by the presence of Love,
Beneath the clear surface reflecting it slide
Tremulous with soft influence; extending its tide
From the Andes to Atlas, round mountain and isle,
Round sea-birds and wrecks, paved with heaven's azure smile,
The wide world of waters is vibrating. Where 135
Is the ship? On the verge of the wave where it lay
One tiger is mingled in ghastly affray
With a sea-snake. The foam and the smoke of the battle
Stain the clear air with sunbows; the jar, and the rattle
Of solid bones crushed by the infinite stress 140
Of the snake's adamantine voluminousness;
And the hum of the hot blood that spouts and rains
Where the gripe of the tiger has wounded the veins,
Swollen with rage, strength, and effort; the whirl and the splash
As of some hideous engine whose brazen teeth smash 145
The thin winds and soft waves into thunder; the screams

And hissings crawl fast o'er the smooth ocean streams,
 Each sound like a centipede. Near this commotion,
 A blue shark is hanging within the blue ocean,
 The fin-winged tomb of the victor. The other 150
 Is winning his way from the fate of his brother,
 To his own with the speed of despair. Lo! a boat
 Advances; twelve rowers with the impulse of thought
 Urge on the keen keel, the brine foams. At the stern
 Three marksmen stand levelling. Hot bullets burn 155
 In the breast of the tiger, which yet bears him on
 To his refuge and ruin. One fragment alone,
 'Tis dwindling and sinking, 'tis now almost gone,
 Of the wreck of the vessel peers out of the sea.
 With her left hand she grasps it impetuously, 160
 With her right she sustains her fair infant. Death, Fear,
 Love, Beauty, are mixed in the atmosphere;
 Which trembles and burns with the fervour of dread
 Around her wild eyes, her bright hand, and her head,
 Like a meteor of light o'er the waters! her child 165
 Is yet smiling, and playing, and murmuring; so smiled
 The false deep ere the storm. Like a sister and brother
 The child and the ocean still smile on each other,
 Whilst——

ODE TO HEAVEN.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS.

FIRST SPIRIT.

PALACE-ROOF of cloudless nights!

Paradise of golden lights!

Deep, immeasurable, vast,
 Which art now, and which wert then

Of the present and the past,

Of the eternal where and when,

Presence-chamber, temple, home,

Ever-canopying dome,

Of acts and ages yet to come!

Glorious shapes have life in thee, 10
 Earth, and all earth's company ;
 Living globes which ever throng
 Thy deep chasms and wildernesses ;
 And green worlds that glide along ;
 And swift stars with flashing tresses ; 15
 And icy moons most cold and bright,
 And mighty suns beyond the night,
 Atoms of intensest light.

Even thy name is as a god,
 Heaven ! for thou art the abode 20
 Of that power which is the glass
 Wherein man his nature sees.
 Generations as they pass
 Worship thee with bended knees.
 Their unremaining gods and they 25
 Like a river roll away :
 Thou remainest such alway.

SECOND SPIRIT.

Thou art but the mind's first chamber,
 Round which its young fancies clamber,
 Like weak insects in a cave, 30
 Lighted up by stalactites ;
 But the portal of the grave,
 Where a world of new delights
 Will make thy best glories seem
 But a dim and noonday gleam 35
 From the shadow of a dream !

THIRD SPIRIT.

Peace ! the abyss is wreathed with scorn
 At your presumption, atom-born !
 What is heaven ? and what are ye
 Who its brief expanse inherit ? 40
 What are suns and spheres which flee
 With the instinct of that spirit
 Of which ye are but a part ?
 Drops which Nature's mighty heart
 Drives through thinnest veins. Depart ! 45

What is heaven? a globe of dew,
 Filling in the morning new
 Some eyed flower whose young leaves waken
 On an unimagined world:
 Constellated suns unshaken, 50
 Orbits measureless, are furled
 In that frail and fading sphere,
 With ten millions gathered there,
 To tremble, gleam, and disappear.

AN EXHORTATION.

CAMELIONS feed on light and air:
 Poets' food is love and fame:
 If in this wide world of care
 Poets could but find the same
 With as little toil as they, 5
 Would they ever change their hue
 As the light camelions do,
 Suiting it to every ray
 Twenty times a-day?

Poets are on this cold earth, 10
 As camelions might be,
 Hidden from their early birth
 In a cave beneath the sea;
 Where light is camelions change:
 Where love is not, poets do: 15
 Fame is love disguised: if few
 Find either never think it strange
 That poets range.

Yet dare not stain with wealth or power
 A poet's free and heavenly mind: 20
 If bright camelions should devour
 Any food but beams and wind,
 They would grow as earthly soon
 As their brother lizards are.
 Children of a sunnier star, 25
 Spirits from beyond the moon,
 O, refuse the boon!

ODE TO THE WEST WIND.¹

I.

O, WILD West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,
Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O, thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed
The wingèd seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the spring shall blow
Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill:
Wild Spirit, which art moving every where;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, O, hear!

II.

Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,
Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine airy surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head
Of some fierce Mænad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

¹ This poem was conceived and chiefly written in a wood that skirts the Arno, near Florence, and on a day when that tempestuous wind, whose temperature is at once mild and animating, was collecting the vapours which pour down the autumnal rains. They began, as I foresaw, at sunset with a violent tempest of hail and rain, attended by that magnificent thunder and lightning peculiar to the Cisalpine regions.

The phenomenon alluded to at the conclusion of the third stanza is well known to naturalists. The vegetation at the bottom of the sea, of rivers, and of lakes, sympathises with that of the land in the change of seasons, and is consequently influenced by the winds which announce it.

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
 Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
 Vaulted with all thy congregated might
 Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
 Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: O, hear!

III.

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
 The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
 Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,
 Beside a pumice isle in Baiæ's bay,
 And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
 Quivering within the wave's intenser day,
 All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
 So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
 For whose path the Atlantic's level powers
 Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
 The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
 The sapless foliage of the ocean, know
 Thy voice, and suddenly grow grey with fear,
 And tremble and despoil themselves: O, hear!

IV.

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
 If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
 A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share
 The impulse of thy strength, only less free
 Than thou, O, uncontrollable! If even
 I were as in my boyhood, and could be
 The comrade of thy wanderings over heaven,
 As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
 Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven
 As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
 Oh! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
 I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!
 A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
 One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

V.

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
 What if my leaves are falling like its own!
 The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
 Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, spirit fierce,
 My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
 Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
 And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
 Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
 Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O, wind,
 If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

AN ODE,

[WRITTEN, OCTOBER, 1819, BEFORE THE SPANIARDS HAD RECOVERED
 THEIR LIBERTY.]

ARISE, arise, arise!

There is blood on the earth that denies ye bread;

Be your wounds like eyes

To weep for the dead, the dead, the dead.

What other grief were it just to pay?

5

Your sons, your wives, your brethren, were they;

Who said they were slain on the battle day?

Awaken, awaken, awaken!

The slave and the tyrant are twin-born foes;

Be the cold chains shaken

10

To the dust where your kindred repose, repose:

Their bones in the grave will start and move,

When they hear the voices of those they love,

Most loud in the holy combat above.

Wave, wave high the banner! 15
 When Freedom is riding to conquest by:
 Though the slaves that fan her
 Be Famine and Toil, giving sigh for sigh.
 And ye who attend her imperial car,
 Lift not your hands in the banded war, 20
 But in her defence whose children ye are.

Glory, glory, glory,
 To those who have greatly suffered and done!
 Never name in story
 Was greater than that which ye shall have won. 25
 Conquerors have conquered their foes alone,
 Whose revenge, pride, and power they have overthrown:
 Ride ye, more victorious, over your own.

Bind, bind every brow
 With crownlets of violet, ivy, and pine: 30
 Hide the blood-stains now
 With hues which sweet nature has made divine:
 Green strength, azure hope, and eternity:
 But let not the pansy among them be;
 Ye were injured, and that means memory. 35

CANCELLED STANZA.

Gather, O gather,
 Foeman and friend in love and peace!
 Waves sleep together
 When the blasts that called them to battle, cease.
 For fangless Power grown tame and mild 40
 Is at play with Freedom's fearless child—
 The dove and the serpent reconciled!

THE CLOUD.

I BRING fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,
 From the seas and the streams;

I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
 In their noon-day dreams.
From my wings are shaken the dews that waken 5
 The sweet buds every one,
When rocked to rest on their mother's breast,
 As she dances about the sun.
I wield the flail of the lashing hail,
 And whiten the green plains under, 10
And then again I dissolve it in rain,
 And laugh as I pass in thunder.

I sift the snow on the mountains below,
 And their great pines groan aghast;
And all the night 'tis my pillow white, 15
 While I sleep in the arms of the blast.
Sublime on the towers of my skiey bowers,
 Lightning my pilot sits,
In a cavern under is fettered the thunder,
 It struggles and howls at fits; 20
Over earth and ocean, with gentle motion,
 This pilot is guiding me,
Lured by the love of the genii that move
 In the depths of the purple sea;
Over the rills, and the crags, and the hills, 25
 Over the lakes and the plains,
Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream,
 The Spirit he loves remains;
And I all the while bask in heaven's blue smile,
 Whilst he is dissolving in rains. 30

The sanguine sunrise, with his meteor eyes,
 And his burning plumes outspread,
Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,
 When the morning star shines dead,
As on the jag of a mountain crag, 35
 Which an earthquake rocks and swings,
An eagle alit one moment may sit
 In the light of its golden wings.
And when sunset may breathe, from the lit sea beneath,
 Its ardours of rest and of love, 40

And the crimson pall of eve may fall
 From the depth of heaven above,
 With wings folded I rest, on mine airy nest,
 As still as a brooding dove.

That orbèd maiden with white fire laden, 45
 Whom mortals call the moon,
 Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,
 By the midnight breezes strewn;
 "And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,
 Which only the angels hear, 50
 May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof,
 The stars peep behind her and peer;
 And I laugh to see them whirl and flee,
 Like a swarm of golden bees,
 When I widen the rent in my wind-built tent, 55
 Till the calm rivers, lakes, and seas,
 Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,
 Are each paved with the moon and these.

I bind the sun's throne with a burning zone,
 And the moon's with a girdle of pearl; 60
 The volcanos are dim, and the stars reel and swim,
 When the whirlwinds my banner unfurl.
 From cape to cape, with a bridge-like shape,
 Over a torrent sea,
 Sunbeam-proof, I hang like a roof, 65
 The mountains its columns be.
 The triumphal arch through which I march
 With hurricane, fire, and snow,
 When the powers of the air are chained to my chair,
 Is the million-coloured bow; 70
 The sphere-fire above its soft colours wove,
 While the moist earth was laughing below.

I am the daughter of earth and water,
 And the nursling of the sky;
 I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores; 75
 I change, but I cannot die.
 For after the rain when with never a stain,
 The pavilion of heaven is bare,

And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams,
 Build up the blue dome of air, 80
 I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,
 And out of the caverns of rain,
 Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
 I arise and unbuild it again.

TO A SKYLARK.

HAIL to thee, blithe spirit !
 Bird thou never wert,
 That from heaven, or near it,
 Pourest thy full heart
 In profuse strains of unpremeditated art. 5

Higher still and higher
 From the earth thou springest
 Like a cloud of fire ;
 The blue deep thou wingest,
 And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest. 10

In the golden lightning
 Of the sunken sun,
 O'er which clouds are brightning,
 Thou dost float and run ;
 Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun. 15

The pale purple even
 Melts around thy flight ;
 Like a star of heaven,
 In the broad day-light
 Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight, 20

Keen as are the arrows
 Of that silver sphere,
 Whose intense lamp narrows
 In the white dawn clear,
 Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there. 25

All the earth and air
 With thy voice is loud,
 As, when night is bare,
 From one lonely cloud
 The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is overflowed. 30

What thou art we know not;
 What is most like thee?
 From rainbow clouds there flow not
 Drops so bright to see,
 As from thy presence showers a rain of melody. 35

Like a poet hidden
 In the light of thought,
 Singing hymns unbidden,
 Till the world is wrought
 To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not: 40

Like a high-born maiden
 In a palace tower,
 Soothing her love-laden
 Soul in secret hour
 With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower: 45

Like a glow-worm golden
 In a dell of dew,
 Scattering unbeholden
 Its aerial hue
 Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the
 view: 50

Like a rose embowered
 In its own green leaves,
 By warm winds deflowered,
 Till the scent it gives
 Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-winged
 thieves: 55

Sound of vernal showers
 On the twinkling grass,

Rain-awakened flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass: 60

Teach us, sprite or bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine:
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine. 65

Chorus Hymenæal,
Or triumphal chaunt,
Matched with thine would be all
But an empty vaunt,
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want. 70

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?
What fields, or waves, or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain? 75

With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be:
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee:
Thou lovest; but ne'er knew love's sad satiety. 80

Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream? 85

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not:
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought. 90

Yet if we could scorn
 Hate, and pride, and fear;
 If we were things born
 Not to shed a tear,
 I know not how thy joy we ever should come near. 95

Better than all measures
 Of delightful sound,
 Better than all treasures
 That in books are found,
 Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground! 100

Teach me half the gladness
 That thy brain must know,
 Such harmonious madness
 From my lips would flow,
 The world should listen then, as I am listening now. 105

ODE TO LIBERTY.

Yet, Freedom, yet thy banner torn but flying,
 Streams like a thunder-storm against the wind.

BYRON.

I.

A GLORIOUS people vibrated again
 The lightning of the nations: Liberty
 From heart to heart, from tower to tower, o'er Spain,
 Scattering contagious fire into the sky,
 Gleamed. My soul spurned the chains of its dismay,
 And, in the rapid plumes of song,
 Clothed itself, sublime and strong;
 As a young eagle soars the morning clouds among,
 Hovering in verse o'er its accustomed prey;
 Till from its station in the heaven of fame
 The Spirit's whirlwind rapt it, and the ray
 Of the remotest sphere of living flame
 Which paves the void was from behind it flung,
 As foam from a ship's swiftness, when there came
 A voice out of the deep: I will record the same.

II.

The Sun and the serenest Moon sprang forth:

The burning stars of the abyss were hurled
Into the depths of heaven. The dædal earth,

That island in the ocean of the world,
Hung in its cloud of all-sustaining air:

But this divinest universe

Was yet a chaos and a curse,

For thou wert not: but power from worst producing worse,

The spirit of the beasts was kindled there,

And of the birds, and of the watery forms,

And there was war among them, and despair

Within them, raging without truce or terms:

The bosom of their violated nurse

Groaned, for beasts warred on beasts, and worms on worms,

And men on men; each heart was as a hell of storms.

III.

Man, the imperial shape, then multiplied

His generations under the pavilion

Of the Sun's throne: palace and pyramid,

Temple and prison, to many a swarming million,

Were, as to mountain-wolves their ragged caves.

This human living multitude

Was savage, cunning, blind, and rude,

For thou wert not; but o'er the populous solitude,

Like one fierce cloud over a waste of waves

Hung Tyranny; beneath, sate deified

The sister-pest, congregator of slaves;

Into the shadow of her pinions wide

Anarchs and priests who feed on gold and blood,

Till with the stain their inmost souls are dyed,

Drove the astonished herds of men from every side.

IV.

The nodding promontories, and blue isles,

And cloud-like mountains, and dividuous waves

Of Greece, basked glorious in the open smiles

Of favouring heaven: from their enchanted caves

Prophetic echoes flung dim melody.

On the unapprehensive wild
 The vine, the corn, the olive mild,
 Grew savage yet, to human use unreconciled;
 And, like unfolded flowers beneath the sea,
 Like the man's thought dark in the infant's brain,
 Like aught that is which wraps what is to be,
 Art's deathless dreams lay veiled by many a vein
 Of Parian stone; and yet a speechless child,
 Verse murmured, and Philosophy did strain
 Her lidless eyes for thee; when o'er the Ægean main

V.

Athens arose: a city such as vision
 Builds from the purple crags and silver towers
 Of battlemented cloud, as in derision
 Of kingliest masonry: the ocean-floors
 Pave it; the evening sky pavilions it;
 Its portals are inhabited
 By thunder-zonèd winds, each head
 Within its cloudy wings with sunfire garlanded,
 A divine work! Athens diviner yet
 Gleamed with its crest of columns, on the will
 Of man, as on a mount of diamond, set;
 For thou wert, and thine all-creative skill
 Peopled with forms that mock the eternal dead
 In marble immortality, that hill
 Which was thine earliest throne and latest oracle.

VI.

Within the surface of Time's fleeting river
 Its wrinkled image lies, as then it lay
 Immovably unquiet, and for ever
 It trembles, but it cannot pass away!
 The voices of thy bards and sages thunder
 With an earth-awakening blast
 Through the caverns of the past;
 Religion veils her eyes; Oppression shrinks aghast:
 A wingèd sound of joy, and love, and wonder,
 Which soars where Expectation never flew,

Rending the veil of space and time asunder!
 One ocean feeds the clouds, and streams, and dew;
 One sun illumines heaven; one spirit vast
 With life and love makes chaos ever new,
 As Athens doth the world with thy delight renew.

VII.

Then Rome was, and from thy deep bosom fairest,
 Like a wolf-cub from a Cadmæan Mænad,¹
 She drew the milk of greatness, though thy dearest
 From that Elysian food was yet unweaned;
 And many a deed of terrible uprightness
 By thy sweet love was sanctified;
 And in thy smile, and by thy side,
 Saintly Camillus lived, and firm Atilius died.
 But when tears stained thy robe of vestal whiteness,
 And gold profaned thy capitolian throne,
 Thou didst desert, with spirit-wingèd lightness,
 The senate of the tyrants: they sunk prone
 Slaves of one tyrant: Palatinus sighed
 Faint echoes of Ionian song; that tone
 Thou didst delay to hear, lamenting to disown.

VIII.

From what Hyrcanian glen or frozen hill,
 Or piny promontory of the Arctic main,
 Or utmost islet inaccessible,
 Didst thou lament the ruin of thy reign,
 Teaching the woods and waves, and desert rocks,
 And every Naiad's ice-cold urn,
 To talk in echoes sad and stern,
 Of that sublimest lore which man had dared unlearn?
 For neither didst thou watch the wizard flocks
 Of the Scald's dreams, nor haunt the Druid's sleep.
 What if the tears rained through thy shattered locks
 Were quickly dried? for thou didst groan, not weep
 When from its sea of death to kill and burn,
 The Galilean serpent forth did creep,
 And made thy world an undistinguishable heap.

¹ See the Bacchæ of Euripides.

IX.

A thousand years the Earth cried, Where art thou?
 And then the shadow of thy coming fell
 On Saxon Alfred's olive-cinctured brow:
 And many a warrior-peopled citadel,
 Like rocks which fire lifts out of the flat deep,
 Arose in sacred Italy,
 Frowning o'er the tempestuous sea
 Of kings, and priests, and slaves, in tower-crowned majesty;
 That multitudinous anarchy did sweep,
 And burst around their walls, like idle foam,
 Whilst from the human spirit's deepest deep
 Strange melody with love and awe struck dumb
 Dissonant arms; and Art, which cannot die,
 With divine wand traced on our earthly home
 Fit imagery to pave heaven's everlasting dome.

X.

Thou huntress swifter than the Moon! thou terror
 Of the world's wolves! thou bearer of the quiver,
 Whose sunlike shafts pierce tempest-wingèd Error,
 As light may pierce the clouds when they dis sever
 In the calm regions of the orient day!
 Luther caught thy wakening glance,
 Like lightning, from his leaden lance
 Reflected, it dissolved the visions of the trance
 In which, as in a tomb, the nations lay;
 And England's prophets hailed thee as their queen,
 In songs whose music cannot pass away,
 Though it must flow for ever: not unseen
 Before the spirit-sighted countenance
 Of Milton didst thou pass, from the sad scene
 Beyond whose night he saw, with a dejected mien.

XI.

The eager hours and unreluctant years
 As on a dawn-illuminèd mountain stood,
 Trampling to silence their loud hopes and fears,
 Darkening each other with their multitude,
 And cried aloud, Liberty! Indignation

Answered Pity from her cave;
 Death grew pale within the grave,
 And Desolation howled to the destroyer, Save!
 When like heaven's sun girt by the exhalation
 Of its own glorious light, thou didst arise,
 Chasing thy foes from nation unto nation
 Like shadows: as if day had cloven the skies
 At dreaming midnight o'er the western wave,
 Men started, staggering with a glad surprise,
 Under the lightnings of thine unfamiliar eyes.

XII.

Thou heaven of earth! what spells could pall thee then,
 In ominous eclipse? a thousand years
 Bred from the slime of deep oppression's den,
 Dyed all thy liquid light with blood and tears,
 Till thy sweet stars could weep the stain away;
 How like Bacchanals of blood
 Round France, the ghastly vintage, stood
 Destruction's sceptred slaves, and Folly's mitred brood!
 When one, like them, but mightier far than they,
 The Anarch of thine own bewildered powers
 Rose: armies mingled in obscure array,
 Like clouds with clouds, darkening the sacred bowers
 Of serene heaven. He, by the past pursued,
 Rests with those dead, but unforgotten hours,
 Whose ghosts scare victor kings in their ancestral towers.

XIII.

England yet sleeps: was she not called of old?
 Spain calls her now, as with its thrilling thunder
 Vesuvius wakens Ætna, and the cold
 Snow-crags by its reply are cloven in sunder:
 O'er the lit waves every Æolian isle
 From Pithecusa to Pelorus
 Howls, and leaps, and glares in chorus:
 They cry, Be dim; ye lamps of heaven suspended o'er us.
 Her chains are threads of gold, she need but smile
 And they dissolve; but Spain's were links of steel,

Till bit to dust by virtue's keenest file.
 Twins of a single destiny! appeal
 To the eternal years enthroned before us,
 In the dim West; impress us from a seal,
 All ye have thought and done! Time cannot dare conceal.

XIV.

Tomb of Arminius! render up thy dead,
 Till, like a standard from a watch-tower's staff,
 His soul may stream over the tyrant's head;
 Thy victory shall be his epitaph,
 Wild Bacchanal of truth's mysterious wine,
 King-deluded Germany,
 His dead spirit lives in thee.
 Why do we fear or hope? thou art already free!
 And thou, lost Paradise of this divine
 And glorious world! thou flowery wilderness!
 Thou island of eternity! thou shrine
 Where desolation clothed with loveliness,
 Worships the thing thou wert! O Italy,
 Gather thy blood into thy heart; repress
 The beasts who make their dens thy sacred palaces

XV.

O, that the free would stamp the impious name
 Of KING into the dust! or write it there,
 So that this blot upon the page of fame
 Were as a serpent's path, which the light air
 Erases, and the flat sands close behind!
 Ye the oracle have heard:
 Lift the victory-flashing sword,
 And cut the snaky knots of this foul gordian word,
 Which weak itself as stubble, yet can bind
 Into a mass, irrefragably firm,
 The axes and the rods which awe mankind;
 The sound has poison in it, 'tis the sperm
 Of what makes life foul, cankerous, and abhorred;
 Disdain not thou, at thine appointed term,
 To set thine armed heel on this reluctant worm.

XVI.

O, that the wise from their bright minds would kindle
 Such lamps within the dome of this dim world,
 That the pale name of PRIEST might shrink and dwindle
 Into the hell from which it first was hurled,
 A scoff of impious pride from fiends impure;
 Till human thoughts might kneel alone
 Each before the judgement-throne
 Of its own aweless soul, or of the power unknown!
 O, that the words which make the thoughts obscure
 From which they spring, as clouds of glimmering dew
 From a white lake blot heaven's blue portraiture,
 Were stript of their thin masks and various hue
 And frowns and smiles and splendours not their own,
 Till in the nakedness of false and true
 They stand before their Lord, each to receive its due.

XVII.

He who taught man to vanquish whatsoever
 Can be between the cradle and the grave
 Crowned him the King of Life. O vain endeavour!
 If on his own high will a willing slave,
 He has enthroned the oppression and the oppressor.
 What if earth can clothe and feed
 Amplest millions at their need,
 And power in thought be as the tree within the seed?
 O, what if Art, an ardent intercessor,
 Driving on fiery wings to Nature's throne,
 Checks the great mother stooping to caress her,
 And cries: Give me, thy child, dominion
 Over all height and depth? if Life can breed
 New wants, and wealth from those who toil and groan
 Rend of thy gifts and hers a thousand fold for one.

XVIII.

Come Thou, but lead out of the inmost cave
 Of man's deep spirit, as the morning-star
 Beckons the Sun from the Eoan wave,
 Wisdom. I hear the pennons of her car
 Self-moving, like cloud charioted by flame;

Comes she not, and come ye not,
 Rulers of eternal thought,
 To judge, with solemn truth, life's ill-apportioned lot?
 Blind Love, and equal Justice, and the Fame
 Of what has been, the Hope of what will be?
 O, Liberty! if such could be thy name
 Wert thou disjoined from these, or they from thee:
 If thine or theirs were treasures to be bought
 By blood or tears, have not the wise and free
 Wept tears, and blood like tears? The solemn harmony

XIX.

Paused, and the spirit of that mighty singing
 To its abyss was suddenly withdrawn;
 Then, as a wild swan, when sublimely winging
 Its path athwart the thunder-smoke of dawn,
 Sinks headlong through the ærial golden light
 On the heavy sounding plain,
 When the bolt has pierced its brain;
 As summer clouds dissolve, unburdened of their rain;
 As a far taper fades with fading night,
 As a brief insect dies with dying day,
 My song, its pinions disarrayed of night,
 Drooped; o'er it closed the echoes far away
 Of the great voice which did its flight sustain,
 As waves which lately paved his watery way
 Hiss round a drowner's head in their tempestuous play.

THE END

[OF PROMETHEUS UNBOUND AND OTHER POEMS.]

CANCELLED PASSAGE OF THE ODE TO LIBERTY.

WITHIN a cavern of man's trackless spirit
 Is throned an Image, so intensely fair
 That the adventurous thoughts that wander near it
 Worship, and as they kneel tremble and wear
 The splendour of its presence, and the light
 Penetrates their dreamlike frame
 Till they become charged with the strength of flame.

ŒDIPUS TYRANNUS;

OR,

SWELLFOOT THE TYRANT.

A TRAGEDY.

IN TWO ACTS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL DORIC.

Choose Reform or civil-war,
When thro' thy streets, instead of hare with dogs,
A CONSORT-QUEEN shall hunt a KING with hogs,
Riding on the IONIAN MINOTAUR.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS TRAGEDY is one of a triad, or system of three Plays, (an arrangement according to which the Greeks were accustomed to connect their Dramatic representations,) elucidating the wonderful and appalling fortunes of the SWELLFOOT dynasty. It was evidently written by some *learned Theban*, and, from its characteristic dullness, apparently before the duties on the importation of *Attic salt* had been repealed by the Bœotarchs. The tenderness with which he treats the PIGS proves him to have been a *sus Bœotice*; possibly *Epicuri de grege porcus*; for, as the poet observes,

“A fellow feeling makes us wond'rous kind.”

No liberty has been taken with the translation of this remarkable piece of antiquity, except the suppressing a seditious and blasphemous Chorus of the Pigs and Bulls at the last act. The word Hoydipouse, (or more properly Œdipus,) has been rendered literally SWELLFOOT, without its having been conceived necessary to determine whether a swelling of the hind or the fore feet of the Swinish Monarch is particularly indicated.

Should the remaining portions of this Tragedy be found, entitled, "*Swellfoot in Angaria*," and "*Charité*," the Translator might be tempted to give them to the reading Public.

ŒDIPUS TYRANNUS.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

TYRANT SWELLFOOT, King of Thebes.

IONA TAURINA, his Queen.

MAMMON, Arch-Priest of Famine.

PURGANAX

DAKRY

LAOCTONOS

} Wizards, Ministers of SWELLFOOT.

The GADFLY

The LEECH

The RAT

MOSES, the Sow-gelder.

SOLOMON, the Porkman.

ZEPHANIAH, Pig Butcher.

The MINOTAUR.

Chorus of the Swinish Multitude.

GUARDS, ATTENDANTS, PRIESTS, &c., &c.

SCENE.—THEBES.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A magnificent Temple, built of thigh-bones and death's heads, and tiled with scalps. Over the Altar the statue of Famine, veiled; a number of boars, sows, and sucking pigs, crowned with thistle, shamrock, and oak, sitting on the steps, and clinging round the altar of the Temple.*

Enter SWELLFOOT, in his Royal robes, without perceiving the FIGS.

SWELLFOOT.

THOU supreme Goddess! by whose power divine
These graceful limbs are clothed in proud array
(*He contemplates himself with satisfaction.*)

Of gold and purple, and this kingly paunch
 Swells like a sail before a favouring breeze,
 And these most sacred nether promontories 5
 Lie satisfied with layers of fat; and these
 Boeotian cheeks, like Egypt's pyramid,
 (Nor with less toil were their foundations laid,¹)
 Sustain the cone of my untroubled brain,
 That point, the emblem of a pointless nothing! 10
 Thou to whom Kings and laurelled Emperors,
 Radical-butchers, Paper-money-millers,
 Bishops and deacons, and the entire army
 Of those fat martyrs to the persecution
 Of stifling turtle-soup, and brandy-devils, 15
 Offer their secret vows! Thou plenteous Ceres
 Of their Eleusis, hail!

THE SWINE.

Eigh! eigh! eigh! eigh!

SWELLFOOT.

Ha! what are ye,

Who, crowned with leaves devoted to the Furies,
 Cling round this sacred shrine?

SWINE.

Aigh! aigh! aigh!

SWELLFOOT.

What! ye that are

The very beasts that offered at her altar 20
 With blood and groans, salt-cake, and fat, and inwards
 Ever propitiate her reluctant will
 When taxes are withheld?

SWINE.

Ugh! ugh! ugh!

SWELLFOOT.

What! ye who grub

With filthy snouts my red potatoes up
 In Allan's rushy bog? Who eat the oats 25

¹ See Universal History for an account of the number of people who died, and the immense consumption of garlick by the wretched Egyptians, who made a sepulchre for the name as well as the bodies of their tyrants.

Up, from my cavalry in the Hebrides?
Who swill the hog-wash soup my cooks digest
From bones, and rags, and scraps of shoe-leather,
Which should be given to cleaner Pigs than you?

THE SWINE.

Semichorus I.

The same, alas! the same;
Though only now the name
Of pig remains to me. 30

Semichorus II.

If 'twere your kingly will
Us wretched swine to kill,
What should we yield to thee? 35

SWELLFOOT.

Why skin and bones, and some few hairs for mortar.

CHORUS OF SWINE.

I have heard your Laureate sing,
That pity was a royal thing;
Under your mighty ancestors, we pigs
Were bless'd as nightingales on myrtle sprigs, 40
Or grass-hoppers that live on noon-day dew,
And sung, old annals tell, as sweetly too,
But now our styes are fallen in, we catch

The murrain and the mange, the scab and itch;
Sometimes your royal dogs tear down our thatch, 45

And then we seek the shelter of a ditch;
Hog-wash or grains, or ruta бага, none
Has yet been ours since your reign begun.

FIRST SOW.

My pigs, 'tis in vain to tug.

SECOND SOW.

I could almost eat my litter. 50

FIRST FIG.

I suck, but no milk will come from the dug.

SECOND FIG.

Our skin and our bones would be bitter.

THE BOARS.

We fight for this rag of greasy rug,
Though a trough of wash would be fitter.

SEMICHORUS.

Happier swine were they than we,
Drowned in the Gadarean sea— 55

I wish that pity would drive out the devils,
Which in your royal bosom hold their revels,
And sink us in the waves of thy compassion!
Alas! the Pigs are an unhappy nation! 60

Now if your Majesty would have our bristles
To bind your mortar with, or fill our colons
With rich blood, or make brawn out of our gristles,
In policy—ask else your royal Solons—
You ought to give us hog-wash and clean straw, 65
And styes well thatched; besides it is the law!

SWELLFOOT.

This is sedition, and rank blasphemy!
Ho! there, my guards!

Enter a GUARD.

GUARD.

Your sacred Majesty.

SWELLFOOT.

Call in the Jews, Solomon the court porkman,
Moses the sow-gelder, and Zephaniah 70
The hog-butcher.

GUARD.

They are in waiting, Sire.

Enter SOLOMON, MOSES, and ZEPHANIAH.

SWELLFOOT.

Out with your knife, old Moses, and spay those sows,
(*The pigs run about in consternation*)

That load the earth with pigs; cut close and deep,
Moral restraint I see has no effect,
Nor prostitution, nor our own example, 75
Starvation, typhus-fever, war, nor prison—
This was the art which the arch-priest of Famine
Hinted at in his charge to the Theban clergy—
Cut close and deep, good Moses.

MOSES.

Let your Majesty

Keep the boars quiet, else——

SWELLFOOT.

Zephaniah, cut 89

That fat hog's throat, the brute seems overfed;
Seditious hunks! to whine for want of grains.

ZEPHANIAH.

Your sacred Majesty, he has the dropsy;—
We shall find pints of hydatids in's liver,
He has not half an inch of wholesome fat 85
Upon his carious ribs——

SWELLFOOT.

'Tis all the same,

He'll serve instead of riot money, when
Our murmuring troops bivouaque in Thebes' streets;
And January winds, after a day
Of butchering, will make them relish carrion. 90
Now, Solomon, I'll sell you in a lump
The whole kit of them.

SOLOMON.

Why, your Majesty,

I could not give——

SWELLFOOT.

Kill them out of the way,

That shall be price enough, and let me hear
Their everlasting grunts and whines no more! 95
(Exeunt, driving in the swine.)

*Enter MAMMON, the Arch-Priest; and PURGANAX, Chief of
the Council of Wizards.*

PURGANAX.

The future looks as black as death, a cloud,
Dark as the frown of Hell, hangs over it—
The troops grow mutinous—the revenue fails—
There's something rotten in us—for the level
Of the State slopes, its very bases topple, 100
The boldest turn their backs upon themselves!

MAMMON.

Why what's the matter, my dear fellow, now?
Do the troops mutiny?—decimate some regiments;
Does money fail?—come to my mint—coin paper,
Till gold be at a discount, and ashamed 105

To show his bilious face, go purge himself,
In emulation of her vestal whiteness.

PURGANAX.

Oh, would that this were all! The oracle!!

MAMMON.

Why it was I who spoke that oracle,
And whether I was dead drunk or inspired, 110
I cannot well remember; nor, in truth,
The oracle itself!

PURGANAX.

The words went thus:—

“Bœotia, choose reform or civil war!
“When through thy streets, instead of hare with dogs,
“A Consort Queen shall hunt a King with hogs, 115
“Riding on the Ionian Minotaur.”

MAMMON.

Now if the oracle had ne’er foretold
This sad alternative, it must arrive,
Or not, and so it must now that it has,
And whether I was urged by grace divine, 120
Or Lesbian liquor to declare these words,
Which must, as all words must, be false or true;
It matters not: for the same power made all,
Oracle, wine, and me and you—or none—
’Tis the same thing. If you knew as much 125
Of oracles as I do——

PURGANAX.

You arch-priests

Believe in nothing; if you were to dream
Of a particular number in the Lottery,
You would not buy the ticket?

MAMMON.

Yet our tickets

Are seldom blanks. But what steps have you taken? 130
For prophecies when once they get abroad,
Like liars who tell the truth to serve their ends,
Or hypocrites who, from assuming virtue,
Do the same actions that the virtuous do,
Contrive their own fulfilment. This Iona—— 135
Well—you know what the chaste Pasiphae did,

Wife to that most religious King of Crete,
 And still how popular the tale is here;
 And these dull swine of Thebes boast their descent
 From the free Minotaur. You know they still 140
 Call themselves Bulls, though thus degenerate,
 And every thing relating to a bull
 Is popular and respectable in Thebes.
 Their arms are seven bulls in a field gules,
 They think their strength consists in eating beef,— 145
 Now there were danger in the precedent
 If Queen Iona——

PURGANAX.

I have taken good care
 That shall not be. I struck the crust o' the earth
 With this enchanted rod, and Hell lay bare!
 And from a cavern full of ugly shapes, 150
 I chose a LEECH, a GADFLY, and a RAT.
 The gadfly was the same which Juno sent
 To agitate Io,¹ and which Ezechiel² mentions
 That the Lord whistled for out of the mountains
 Of utmost Æthiopia, to torment 155
 Mesopotamian Babylon. The beast
 Has a loud trumpet like the Scarabee,
 His crookèd tail is barbed with many stings,
 Each able to make a thousand wounds, and each
 Immedicable; from his convex eyes 160
 He sees fair things in many hideous shapes,
 And trumpets all his falsehood to the world.
 Like other beetles he is fed on dung—
 He has eleven feet with which he crawls,
 Trailing a blistering slime, and this foul beast 165
 Has tracked Iona from the Theban limits,
 From isle to isle, from city unto city,
 Urging her flight from the far Chersonese
 To fabulous Solyma, and the Ætnean Isle,
 Ortygia, Melite, and Calypso's Rock, 170
 And the swart tribes of Garamant and Fez,

¹ The Prometheus Bound of Æschylus.

² And the Lord whistled for the gadfly out of Æthiopia, and for the bee of Egypt, &c.—EZECHIEL.

Æolia and Elysium, and thy shores,
Parthenope, which now, alas! are free!
And through the fortunate Saturnian land,
Into the darkness of the West.

MAMMON.

But if
This Gadfly should drive Iona hither?

175

PURGANAX.

Gods! what an *if*! but there is my grey RAT:
So thin with want, he can crawl in and out
Of any narrow chink and filthy hole,
And he shall creep into her dressing-room,
And——

180

MAMMON.

My dear friend, where are your wits? as if
She does not always toast a piece of cheese
And bait the trap? and rats, when lean enough
To crawl through *such* chinks——

PURGANAX.

But my LEECH—a leech
Fit to suck blood, with lubricous round rings,
Capaciously expatiative, which make
His little body like a red balloon,
As full of blood as that of hydrogene,
Sucked from men's hearts; insatiably he sucks
And clings, and pulls—a horse-leech, whose deep maw
The plethoric King Swellfoot could not fill,
And who, till full, will cling for ever.

191

MAMMON.

This
For Queen Iona might suffice, and less;
But 'tis the swinish multitude I fear,
And in that fear I have——

PURGANAX.

Done what?

MAMMON.

Disinherited

195

My eldest son Chrysaor, because he
Attended public meetings, and would always

Stand prating there of commerce, public faith,
 Economy, and unadulterate coin,
 And other topics, ultra-radical; 200
 And have entailed my estate, called the Fool's Paradise,
 And funds in fairy-money, bonds, and bills,
 Upon my accomplished daughter Banknotina,
 And married her to the gallows.¹

PURGANAX.

A good match!

MAMMON.

A high connection, Purganax. The bridegroom 205
 Is of a very ancient family,
 Of Hounslow Heath, Tyburn, and the New Drop,
 And has great influence in both Houses;—Oh!
 He makes the fondest husband; nay, *too* fond,—
 New married people should not kiss in public; 210
 But the poor souls love one another so!
 And then my little grandchildren, the gibbets,
 Promising children as you ever saw,—
 The young playing at hanging, the elder learning
 How to hold radicals. They are well taught too, 215
 For every gibbet says its catechism
 And reads a select chapter in the Bible
 Before it goes to play.

(*A most tremendous humming is heard.*)

PURGANAX.

Ha! what do I hear?

Enter the GADFLY.

MAMMON.

Your Gadfly, as it seems, is tired of gadding.

GADFLY.

Hum! hum! hum! 220
 From the lakes of the Alps, and the cold grey scalps
 Of the mountains, I come,
 Hum! hum! hum!
 From Morocco and Fez, and the high palaces
 Of golden Byzantium; 225

¹ If one should marry a gallows, and beget young gibbets, I never saw one so prone.—CYMBELINE.

From the temples divine of old Palestine,
From Athens and Rome,
With a ha! and a hum!
I come! I come!

All inn-doors and windows 230
Were open to me:
I saw all that sin does,
Which lamps hardly see
That burn in the night by the curtained bed,—
The impudent lamps! for they blushed not red, 235
Dinging and singing,
From slumber I rung her,
Loud as the clank of an ironmonger;
Hum! hum! hum!

Far, far, far! 240
With the trump of my lips, and the sting at my hips,
I drove her—afar!
Far, far, far!
From city to city, abandoned of pity,
A ship without needle or star;— 245
Homeless she past, like a cloud on the blast,
Seeking peace, finding war;—
She is here in her car,
From afar, and afar;—
Hum! hum! 250

I have stung her and wrung her,
The venom is working;—
And if you had hung her
With canting and quirking,
She could not be deader than she will be soon;— 255
I have driven her close to you, under the moon,
Night and day, hum! hum! ha!
I have hummed her and drummed her
From place to place, till at last I have dumbbed her,
Hum! hum! hum! 260

LEECH.

I will suck
Blood or muck!

The disease of the state is a plethory,
Who so fit to reduce it as I?

RAT.

I'll slily seize and
Let blood from her weasand,—
Creeping through crevice, and chink, and cranny,
With my snakey tail, and my sides so scranny. 265

PURGANAX.

Aroint ye! thou unprofitable worm! (*to the Leech*)
And thou, dull beetle, get thee back to hell! (*to the Gadfly*)
To sting the ghosts of Babylonian kings, 271
And the ox-headed Io——

SWINE (*within*).

Ugh, ugh, ugh!
Hail! Iona the divine,
We will be no longer swine,
But bulls with horns and dewlaps.

RAT.

For,
You know, my lord, the Minotaur—— 275

PURGANAX (*fiercely*).

Be silent! get to hell! or I will call
The cat out of the kitchen. Well, Lord Mammon,
This is a pretty business. (*Exit the Rat.*)

MAMMON.

I will go
And spell some scheme to make it ugly then.— (*Exit.*) 280

Enter SWELLFOOT.

SWELLFOOT.

She is returned! Taurina is in Thebes
When Swellfoot wishes that she were in hell!
Oh, Hymen, clothed in yellow jealousy,
And waving o'er the couch of wedded kings
The torch of discord with its fiery hair; 285
This is thy work, thou patron saint of queens!
Swellfoot is wived! though parted by the sea,
The very name of wife had conjugal rights;
Her cursèd image ate, drank, slept with me,
And in the arms of Adiposa oft 290

Her memory has received a husband's——

A loud tumult, and cries of "Iona for ever!—No Swellfoot!"

SWELLFOOT.

Hark!

How the swine cry Iona Taurina;
I suffer the real presence; Purganax,
Off with her head!

PURGANAX.

But I must first impanel

A jury of the pigs.

SWELLFOOT.

Pack them then.

295

PURGANAX.

Or fattening some few in two separate styes,
And giving them clean straw, tying some bits
Of ribbon round their legs—giving their sows
Some tawdry lace, and bits of lustre glass,
And their young boars white and red rags, and tails 300
Of cows, and jay feathers, and sticking cauliflowers
Between the ears of the old ones; and when
They are persuaded, that by the inherent virtue
Of these things, they are all imperial pigs,
Good Lord! they'd rip each other's bellies up, 305
Not to say help us in destroying her.

SWELLFOOT.

This plan might be tried too;—where's General
Laoctonos?

Enter LAOCTONOS and DAKRY.

It is my royal pleasure
That you, Lord General, bring the head and body,
If separate it would please me better, hither 310
Of Queen Iona.

LAOCTONOS.

That pleasure I well knew,
And made a charge with those battalions bold,
Called, from their dress and grin, the royal apes,
Upon the swine, who, in a hollow square
Enclosed her, and received the first attack 315

Like so many rhinoceroses, and then
 Retreating in good order, with bare tusks
 And wrinkled snouts presented to the foe,
 Bore her in triumph to the public sty.
 What is still worse, some sows upon the ground 320
 Have given the ape-guards apples, nuts, and gin,
 And they all whisk their tails aloft, and cry,
 "Long live Iona! down with Swellfoot!"

PURGANAX.

Hark!

THE SWINE, *without*.

Long live Iona! down with Swellfoot!

DAKRY.

I

Went to the garret of the swineherd's tower, 325
 Which overlooks the sty, and made a long
 Harangue (all words) to the assembled swine,
 Of delicacy, mercy, judgment, law,
 Morals, and precedents, and purity,
 Adultery, destitution, and divorce, 330
 Piety, faith, and state necessity,
 And how I loved the Queen!—and then I wept
 With the pathos of my own eloquence,
 And every tear turned to a mill-stone, which
 Brained many a gaping pig, and there was made 335
 A slough of blood and brains upon the place,
 Greased with the pounded bacon; round and round
 The mill-stones rolled, ploughing the pavement up,
 And hurling sucking pigs into the air,
 With dust and stones.—

Enter MAMMON.

MAMMON.

I wonder that grey wizards
 Like you should be so beardless in their schemes; 341
 It had been but a point of policy
 To keep Iona and the swine apart.
 Divide and rule! but ye have made a junction
 Between two parties who will govern you 345
 But for my art.—Behold this BAG! it is
 The poison BAG of that Green Spider huge,

On which our spies skulked in ovation through
 The streets of Thebes, when they were paved with dead:
 A bane so much the deadlier fills it now, 850
 As calumny is worse than death,—for here
 The Gadfly's venom, fifty times distilled,
 Is mingled with the vomit of the Leech,
 In due proportion, and black ratsbane, which
 That very Rat, who, like the Pontic tyrant, 855
 Nurtures himself on poison, dare not touch;—
 All is sealed up with the broad seal of Fraud,
 Who is the Devil's Lord High Chancellor,
 And over it the Primate of all Hell
 Murmured this pious baptism:—"Be thou called 860
 "The GREEN BAG; and this power and grace be thine:
 "That thy contents, on whomsoever poured,
 "Turn innocence to guilt, and gentlest looks
 "To savage, foul, and fierce deformity.
 "Let all baptized by thy infernal dew 865
 "Be called adulterer, drunkard, liar, wretch!
 "No name left out which orthodoxy loves,
 "Court Journal or legitimate Review!—
 "Be they called tyrant, beast, fool, glutton, lover
 "Of other wives and husbands than their own— 870
 "The heaviest sin on this side of the Alps!
 "Wither they to a ghastly caricature
 "Of what was human!—let not man or beast
 "Behold their face with unaverted eyes!
 "Or hear their names with ears that tingle not 875
 "With blood of indignation, rage, and shame!"—
 This is a perilous liquor;—good my Lords.—

SWELLFOOT *approaches to touch the GREEN BAG.*

Beware! for God's sake, beware!—if you should break
 The seal, and touch the fatal liquor——

PURGANAX.

There,
 Give it to me. I have been used to handle 880
 All sorts of poisons. His dread Majesty
 Only desires to see the colour of it.

MAMMON.

Now, with a little common sense, my Lords,

Only undoing all that has been done,
(Yet so as it may seem we but confirm it.) 885

Our victory is assured. We must entice
Her Majesty from the sty, and make the pigs
Believe that the contents of the GREEN BAG
Are the true test of guilt or innocence.

And that, if she be guilty, 'twill transform her 890
To manifest deformity like guilt.

If innocent, she will become transfigured
Into an angel, such as they say she is ;
And they will see her flying through the air,
So bright that she will dim the noon-day sun ; 395

Showering down blessings in the shape of comfits.

This, trust a priest, is just the sort of thing
Swine will believe. I'll wager you will see them

Climbing upon the thatch of their low styes,
With pieces of smoked glass, to watch her sail 400

Among the clouds, and some will hold the flaps
Of one another's ears between their teeth,
To catch the coming hail of comfits in.

You, Purganax, who have the gift o' the gab,
Make them a solemn speech to this effect : 405

I go to put in readiness the feast
Kept to the honour of our goddess Famine,
Where, for more glory, let the ceremony
Take place of the uglification of the Queen.

DAKRY (*to Swellfoot*).

I, as the keeper of your sacred conscience, 410
Humbly remind your Majesty that the care
Of your high office, as man-milliner
To red Bellona, should not be deferred.

PURGANAX.

All part, in happier plight to meet again. [*Exeunt.*]

ACT II.

SCENE I.—THE PUBLIC STYE.

*The Boars in full Assembly.**Enter PURGANAX.*

PURGANAX.

GRANT me your patience, Gentlemen and Boars,
Ye, by whose patience under public burthens
The glorious constitution of these styas
Subsists, and shall subsist. The lean-pig rates
Grow with the growing populace of swine, 5
The taxes, that true source of piggishness,
(How can I find a more appropriate term
To include religion, morals, peace, and plenty,
And all that fit Bœotia as a nation
To teach the other nations how to live?) 10
Increase with piggishness itself; and still
Does the revenue, that great spring of all
The patronage, and pensions, and by-payments,
Which free-born pigs regard with jealous eyes,
Diminish, till at length, by glorious steps, 15
All the land's produce will be merged in taxes,
And the revenue will amount to——nothing!
The failure of a foreign market for
Sausages, bristles, and blood-puddings,
And such home manufactures, is but partial; 20
And, that the population of the pigs,
Instead of hog-wash, has been fed on straw
And water, is a fact which is—you know—
That is—it is a state-necessity—
Temporary, of course. Those impious pigs, 25
Who, by frequent squeaks, have dared impugn
The settled Swellfoot system, or to make
Irreverent mockery of the genuflexions
Inculcated by the arch-priest, have been whipt
Into a loyal and an orthodox whine. 30

Things being in this happy state, the Queen
Iona——

A loud cry from the PIGS.

She is innocent! most innocent!

PURGANAX.

That is the very thing that I was saying,
Gentlemen Swine; the Queen Iona being
Most innocent, no doubt, returns to Thebes, 35
And the lean sows and boars collect about her,
Wishing to make her think that WE believe
(I mean those more substantial pigs, who swill
Rich hog-wash, while the others mouth damp straw,) 40
That she is guilty; thus, the lean-pig faction
Seeks to obtain that hog-wash, which has been
Your immemorial right, and which I will
Maintain you in to the last drop of——

A BOAR. (*interrupting him.*)

What

Does any one accuse her of?

PURGANAX.

Why, no one
Makes *any* positive accusation;—but 45
There were hints dropt, and so the privy wizards
Conceived that it became them to advise
His Majesty to investigate their truth;—
Not for his own sake; he could be content
To let his wife play any pranks she pleased, 50
If, by that sufferance, *he* could please the pigs;
But then he fears the morals of the swine,
The sows especially, and what effect
It might produce upon the purity and
Religion of the rising generation 55
Of sucking pigs, if it could be suspected
That Queen Iona—— (*A pause.*)

FIRST BOAR.

Well, go on; we long
To hear what she can possibly have done.

PURGANAX.

Why, it is hinted, that a certain bull—

Thus much is *known* :—the milk-white bulls that feed 60
Beside Clitumnus and the crystal lakes
Of the Cisalpine mountains, in fresh dews
Of lotus-grass and blossoming asphodel,
Sleeking their silken hair, and with sweet breath
Loading the morning winds until they faint 65
With living fragrance, are so beautiful!—
Well, *I* say nothing;—but Europa rode
On such a one from Asia into Crete,
And the enamoured sea grew calm beneath
His gliding beauty. And Pasiphae, 70
Iona's grandmother,——but *she* is innocent!
And that both you and I, and all assert.

FIRST BOAR.

Most innocent!

PURGANAX.

Behold this BAG; a bag——

SECOND BOAR.

Oh! no GREEN BAGS!! Jealousy's eyes are green,
Scorpions are green, and water-snakes, and efts, 75
And verdigris, and——

PURGANAX.

Honourable swine,
In piggish souls can prepossessions reign?
Allow me to remind you, grass is green—
All flesh is grass;—no bacon but is flesh—
Ye are but bacon. This divining BAG 80
(Which is not green, but only bacon colour)
Is filled with liquor, which if sprinkled o'er
A woman guilty of—we all know what—
Makes her so hideous, till she finds one blind
She never can commit the like again. 85
If innocent, she will turn into an angel,
And rain down blessings in the shape of comfits
As she flies up to heaven. Now, my proposal
Is to convert her sacred Majesty
Into an angel, (as I am sure we shall do,) 90
By pouring on her head this mystic water.

(*Shewing the Bag.*)

I know that she is innocent; I wish

Only to prove her so to all the world.

FIRST BOAR.

Excellent, just, and noble Purganax.

SECOND BOAR.

How glorious it will be to see her Majesty
Flying above our heads, her petticoats
Streaming like—like—like—

95

THIRD BOAR.

Any thing.

PURGANAX.

Oh, no!

But like a standard of an admiral's ship,
Or like the banner of a conquering host,
Or like a cloud dyed in the dying day,
Unravell'd on the blast from a white mountain;
Or like a meteor, or a war-steed's mane,
Or water-fall from a dizzy precipice
Scattered upon the wind.

100

FIRST BOAR.

Or a cow's tail,——

SECOND BOAR.

Or *any thing*, as the learned Boar observed.

105

PURGANAX.

Gentlemen Boars, I move a resolution,
That her most sacred Majesty should be
Invited to attend the feast of Famine,
And to receive upon her chaste white body
Dews of Apotheosis from this BAG.

110

A great confusion is heard of the PIGS OUT OF DOORS, which communicates itself to those within. During the first Strophe, the doors of the Stye are staved in, and a number of exceedingly lean Pigs and Sows and Boars rush in.

SEMICHORUS I.

No! Yes!

SEMICHORUS II.

Yes! No!

SEMICHORUS I.

A law!

SEMICHORUS II.

A flaw!

SEMICHORUS I.

Porkers, we shall lose our wash, 115
Or must share it with the lean pigs!

FIRST BOAR.

Order! order! be not rash!

Was there ever such a scene, Pigs!

AN OLD SOW (*rushing in*).

I never saw so fine a dash
Since I first began to wean pigs. 120

SECOND BOAR (*solemnly*).

The Queen will be an angel time enough.

I vote, in form of an amendment, that

Purganax rub a little of that stuff

Upon his face——

PURGANAX.

(His heart is seen to beat through his waistcoat.)

Gods! What would ye be at?

SEMICHORUS I.

Purganax has plainly shown a 125
Cloven foot and jack-daw feather.

SEMICHORUS II.

I vote Swellfoot and Iona

Try the magic test together;

Whenever royal spouses bicker,

Both should try the magic liquor. 130

AN OLD BOAR (*aside*).

A miserable state is that of pigs,

For if their drivers would tear caps and wigs,

The swine must bite each other's ear therefore.

AN OLD SOW (*aside*).

A wretched lot Jove has assigned to swine,

Squabbling makes pig-herds hungry, and they dine
On bacon, and whip sucking-pigs the more. 135

CHORUS.

Hog-wash has been ta'en away:

If the Bull-Queen is divested,

We shall be in every way
 Hunted, stript, exposed, molested; 140
 Let us do whate'er we may,
 That she shall not be arrested.

QUEEN, we entrench you with walls of brawn,
 And palisades of tusks, sharp as a bayonet:
 Place your most sacred person here. We pawn 145
 Our lives that none a finger dare to lay on it.
 Those who wrong you, wrong us;
 Those who hate you, hate us;
 Those who sting you, sting us;
 Those who bait you, bait us; 150

The *oracle* is now about to be
 Fulfilled by circumvolving destiny;
 Which says: "Thebes, choose *reform* or *civil war*,
 "When through your streets, instead of hare with dogs,
 "A CONSORT QUEEN shall hunt a KING with hogs,
 Riding upon the IONIAN MINOTAUR." 156

Enter IONA TAURINA.

IONA TAURINA (*coming forward*).
 Gentlemen swine, and gentle lady-pigs,
 The tender heart of every boar acquits
 Their QUEEN, of any act incongruous
 With native piggishness, and she reposing 160
 With confidence upon the grunting nation,
 Has thrown herself, her cause, her life, her all,
 Her innocence, into their hoggish arms;
 Nor has the expectation been deceived
 Of finding shelter there. Yet know, great boars, 165
 (For such who ever lives among you finds you,
 And so do I) the innocent are proud!
 I have accepted your protection only
 In compliment of your kind love and care,
 Not for necessity. The innocent 170
 Are safest there where trials and dangers wait;
 Innocent Queens o'er white-hot plough-shares tread
 Unsinged, and ladies, Erin's laureate sings it,¹
 Decked with rare gems, and beauty rarer still,

¹ Rich and rare were the gems she wore. See *Moore's Irish Melodies*

Walked from Killarney to the Giant's Causeway, 175
Through rebels, smugglers, troops of yeomanry,
White boys and orange boys, and constables,
Tithe-proctors, and excise people, uninjured!
Thus I!——

Lord PURGANAX, I do commit myself 180
Into your custody, and am prepared
To stand the test, whatever it may be!

PURGANAX.

This magnanimity in your sacred Majesty
Must please the pigs. You cannot fail of being
A heavenly angel. Smoke your bits of glass, 185
Ye loyal swine, or her transfiguration
Will blind your wondering eyes.

AN OLD BOAR (*aside*).

Take care, my Lord,
They do not smoke you first.

PURGANAX.

At the approaching feast
Of Famine, let the expiation be.

SWINE.

Content! content!

IONA TAURINA (*aside*).

I, most content of all, 190
Know that my foes even thus prepare their fall!

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

SCENE II.

The interior of the Temple of FAMINE. The statue of the Goddess, a skeleton clothed in party-coloured rags, seated upon a heap of skulls and loaves intermingled. A number of exceedingly fat Priests in black garments arrayed on each side, with marrow-bones and cleavers in their hands. A flourish of trumpets.

Enter MAMMON as arch-priest, SWELLFOOT, DAKRY, PURGANAX, LAOCTONOS, followed by IONA TAURINA guarded. On the other side enter the SWINE.

Chorus of PRIESTS,

Accompanied by the Court Porkman on marrow-bones and cleavers.

GODDESS bare, and gaunt, and pale,
Empress of the world, all hail!
What though Cretans old called thee
City-crested Cybele?

We call thee FAMINE!

5

Goddess of fasts and feasts, starving and cramming!
Through thee, for emperors, kings, and priests and lords,
Who rule by viziers, sceptres, banknotes, words,
The earth pours forth its plenteous fruits,
Corn, wool, linen, flesh, and roots—

10

Those who consume these fruits thro' thee grow fat,
Those who produce these fruits thro' thee grow lean,
Whatever change takes place, oh, stick to that!

And let things be as they have ever been;

At least while we remain thy priests,

15

And proclaim thy fasts and feasts!

Through thee the sacred SWELLFOOT dynasty

Is based upon a rock amid that sea

Whose waves are swine—so let it ever be!

SWELLFOOT, &c. seat themselves at a table, magnificently covered at the upper end of the temple. Attendants pass over the stage with hog-wash in pails. A number of pigs, exceedingly lean, follow them licking up the wash.

MAMMON.

I fear your sacred Majesty has lost 20
The appetite which you were used to have.
Allow me now to recommend this dish—
A simple kickshaw by your Persian cook,
Such as is served at the great King's second table.
The price and pains which its ingredients cost, 25
Might have maintained some dozen families
A winter or two—not more—so plain a dish
Could scarcely disagree.——

SWELLFOOT.

After the trial,
And these fastidious pigs are gone, perhaps
I may recover my lost appetite,— 30
I feel the gout flying about my stomach—
Give me a glass of Maraschino punch.

PURGANAX (*Filling his glass, and standing up*).
The glorious constitution of the Pigs!

ALL.

A toast! a toast! stand up and three times three!

DAKRY.

No heel-taps—darken day-lights!—

LAOCTONOS.

Claret, somehow, 35
Puts me in mind of blood, and blood of claret!

SWELLFOOT.

Laoctonos is fishing for a compliment,
But 'tis his due. Yes, you have drunk more wine,
And shed more blood than any man in Thebes.

(*To Purganax*)

For God's sake stop the grunting of those pigs! 40

PURGANAX.

We dare not, Sire, 'tis Famine's privilege.

CHORUS OF SWINE.

Hail to thee, hail to thee, Famine!

Thy throne is on blood, and thy robe is of rags;
Thou devil which livest on damning; 44
Saint of new churches, and cant, and GREEN BAGS,

Till in pity and terror thou risest,
 Confounding the schemes of the wisest,
 When thou liftest thy skeleton form,
 When the loaves and the skulls roll about,
 We will greet thee—the voice of a storm 50
 Would be lost in our terrible shout!

Then hail to thee, hail to thee, Famine!
 Hail to thee, Empress of Earth!
 When thou risest, dividing possessions;
 When thou risest, uprooting oppressions; 55
 In the pride of thy ghastly mirth.
 Over palaces, temples, and graves,
 We will rush as thy minister-slaves,
 Trampling behind in thy train,
 Till all be made level again! 60

MAMMON.

I hear a crackling of the giant bones
 Of the dread image, and in the black pits
 Which once were eyes, I see two livid flames.
 These prodigies are oracular, and show
 The presence of the unseen Deity. 65
 Mighty events are hastening to their doom!

SWELLFOOT.

I only hear the lean and mutinous swine
 Grunting about the temple.

DAKRY.

 In a crisis
 Of such exceeding delicacy, I think
 We ought to put her Majesty, the QUEEN, 70
 Upon her trial without delay.

MAMMON.

THE BAG

Is here.

PURGANAX.

I have rehearsed the entire scene
 With an ox bladder and some ditch-water,
 On Lady P.—it cannot fail.

(Taking up the bag) Your Majesty *(to Swellfoot)*
 In such a filthy business had better 75

Stand on one side, lest it should sprinkle you,
 A spot or two on me would do no harm,
 Nay, it might hide the blood, which the sad genius
 Of the Green Isle has fixed, as by a spell,
 Upon my brow—which would stain all its seas, 80
 But which those seas could never wash away!

IONA TAURINA.

My Lord, I am ready—nay, I am impatient
 To undergo the test.

A graceful figure in a semi-transparent veil passes unnoticed through the Temple; the word LIBERTY is seen through the veil, as if it were written in fire upon its forehead. Its words are almost drowned in the furious grunting of the Pigs, and the business of the trial. She kneels on the steps of the Altar, and speaks in tones at first faint and low, but which ever become louder and louder.

Mighty Empress! Death's white wife!
 Ghastly mother-in-law of life! 85
 By the God who made thee such,
 By the magic of thy touch,
 By the starving and the cramming,
 Of fasts and feasts! by thy dread self, O Famine!
 I charge thee! when thou wake the multitude 90
 Thou lead them not upon the paths of blood
 The earth did never mean her foison
 For those who crown life's cup with poison
 Of fanatic rage and meaningless revenge—
 But for those radiant spirits, who are still 95
 The standard-bearers in the van of Change.
 Be they th' appointed stewards, to fill
 The lap of Pain, and Toil, and Age!—
 Remit, O Queen! thy accustomed rage!
 Be what thou art not! In voice faint and low 100
 FREEDOM calls *Famine*,—her eternal foe,
 To brief alliance, hollow truce.—Rise now!

Whilst the veiled Figure has been chaunting this strophe, MAMMON, DAKRY, LAOCTONOS, and SWELLFOOT, have surrounded IONA TAURINA, who, with her hands folded on her breast, and her eyes lifted to Heaven, stands, as with

saint-like resignation, to wait the issue of the business, in perfect confidence of her innocence.

PURGANAX, after unsealing the GREEN BAG, is gravely about to pour the liquor upon her head, when suddenly the whole expression of her figure and countenance changes; she snatches it from his hand with a loud laugh of triumph, and empties it over SWELLFOOT and his whole Court, who are instantly changed into a number of filthy and ugly animals, and rush out of the Temple. The image of FAMINE then arises with a tremendous sound, the PIGS begin scrambling for the loaves, and are tripped up by the skulls; all those who EAT the loaves are turned into BULLS, and arrange themselves quietly behind the altar. The image of FAMINE sinks through a chasm in the earth, and a MINOTAUR rises.

MINOTAUR.

I am the Ionian Minotaur, the mightiest
 Of all Europa's taurine progeny—
 I am the old traditional man-bull; 105
 And from my ancestors having been Ionian,
 I am called Ion, which, by interpretation,
 Is JOHN; in plain Theban, that is to say,
 My name's JOHN BULL; I am a famous hunter,
 And can leap any gate in all Boeotia, 110
 Even the palings of the royal park,
 Or double ditch about the new enclosures;
 And if your Majesty will deign to mount me,
 At least till you have hunted down your game,
 I will not throw you. 115

IONA TAURINA.

(During this speech she has been putting on boots and spurs, and a hunting cap, buckrishly cocked on one side, and tucking up her hair, she leaps nimbly on his back.)

Ho! ho! tallyho! tallyho! ho! ho!
 Come, let us hunt these ugly badgers down,
 These stinking foxes, these devouring otters,
 These hares, these wolves, these any thing but men.
 Hey, for a whipper-in! my loyal pigs, 120
 Now let your noses be as keen as beagles,
 Your steps as swift as greyhounds, and your cries
 More dulcet and symphonious than the bells

Of village-towers, on sunshine holiday;
Wake all the dewy woods with jangling music. 125
Give them no law (are they not beasts of blood?)
But such as they gave you. Tallyho! ho!
Through forest, furze, and bog, and den, and desart,
Pursue the ugly beasts! tallyho! ho!

Full Chorus of IONA and the SWINE.

Tallyho! tallyho! 130
Through rain, hail, and snow,
Through brake, gorse, and briar,
Through fen, flood, and mire,
We go! we go!

Tallyho! tallyho! 135
Through pond, ditch, and slough.
Wind them, and find them,
Like the Devil behind them,
Tallyho! tallyho!

(Exeunt, in full cry; IONA driving on the SWINE, with the empty GREEN BAG.)

THE END.

EPIPSYCHIDION.

VERSES ADDRESSED TO THE NOBLE AND
UNFORTUNATE LADY,

EMILIA V——,

NOW IMPRISONED IN THE CONVENT OF ——.

L'anima amante si slancia fuori del creato, e si crea nel
infinito un Mondo tutto per essa, diverso assai da questo
oscuro e pauroso baratro. HER OWN WORDS.

My Song, I fear that thou wilt find but few
Who fitly shall conceive thy reasoning,
Of such hard matter dost thou entertain;
Whence, if by misadventure, chance should bring
Thee to base company, (as chance may do)
Quite unaware of what thou dost contain,
I prithee, comfort thy sweet self again,
My last delight! tell them that they are dull,
And bid them own that thou art beautiful.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE WRITER of the following Lines died at Florence, as he was preparing for a voyage to one of the wildest of the Sporades, which he had bought, and where he had fitted up the ruins of an old building, and where it was his hope to have realised a scheme of life, suited perhaps to that happier and better world of which he is now an inhabitant, but hardly practicable in this. His life was singular; less on account of the romantic vicissitudes which diversified it, than the ideal tinge which it received from his own character and feelings. The present Poem, like the Vita Nuova of Dante, is sufficiently intelligible

to a certain class of readers without a matter-of-fact history of the circumstances to which it relates; and to a certain other class it must ever remain incomprehensible, from a defect of a common organ of perception for the ideas of which it treats. Not but that, *gran vergogna sarebbe a colui, che rimasse cosa sotto veste di figura, o di colore rettorico: e domandato non sapesse denudare le sue parole da cotai veste, in guisa che avessero verace intendimento.*

The present poem appears to have been intended by the Writer as the dedication to some longer one. The stanza on the opposite page is almost a literal translation from Dante's famous Canzone

Voi, ch' intendendo, il terzo ciel movete, &c.

The presumptuous application of the concluding lines to his own composition will raise a smile at the expense of my unfortunate friend: be it a smile not of contempt, but pity.

S.

EPIPSYCHIDION

SWEET Spirit! Sister of that orphan one,
Whose empire is the name thou weepest on,
In my heart's temple I suspend to thee
These votive wreaths of withered memory.

Poor captive bird! who, from thy narrow cage, 5
Pourest such music, that it might assuage
The rugged hearts of those who prisoned thee,
Were they not deaf to all sweet melody;
This song shall be thy rose: its petals pale
Are dead, indeed, my adored Nightingale! 10
But soft and fragrant is the faded blossom,
And it has no thorn left to wound thy bosom.

High, spirit-wingèd Heart! who dost for ever
Beat thine unfeeling bars with vain endeavour,

Till those bright plumes of thought, in which arrayed
 It over-soared this low and worldly shade, 16
 Lie shattered; and thy panting, wounded breast
 Stains with dear blood its unmaternal nest!
 I weep vain tears: blood would less bitter be,
 Yet poured forth gladlier, could it profit thee. 20

Seraph of Heaven! too gentle to be human,
 Veiling beneath that radiant form of Woman
 All that is insupportable in thee
 Of light, and love, and immortality!
 Sweet Benediction in the eternal Curse! 25
 Veiled Glory of this lampless Universe!
 Thou Moon beyond the clouds! Thou living Form
 Among the Dead! Thou Star above the Storm!
 Thou Wonder, and thou Beauty, and thou Terror!
 Thou Harmony of Nature's art! Thou Mirror 30
 In whom, as in the splendour of the Sun,
 All shapes look glorious which thou gazest on!
 Aye, even the dim words which obscure thee now
 Flash, lightning-like, with unaccustomed glow;
 I pray thee that thou blot from this sad song 35
 All of its much mortality and wrong,
 With those clear drops, which start like sacred dew
 From the twin lights thy sweet soul darkens through,
 Weeping, till sorrow becomes ecstasy:
 Then smile on it, so that it may not die. 40

I never thought before my death to see
 Youth's vision thus made perfect. Emily,
 I love thee; though the world by no thin name
 Will hide that love, from its unvalued shame.
 Would we two had been twins of the same mother! 45
 Or, that the name my heart lent to another
 Could be a sister's bond for her and thee,
 Blending two beams of one eternity!
 Yet were one lawful and the other true,
 These names, though dear, could paint not, as is due,
 How beyond refuge I am thine. Ah me! 51
 I am not thine: I am a part of *thee*.

Sweet Lamp! my moth-like Muse has burnt its wings;
 Or, like a dying swan who soars and sings,
 Young Love should teach Time, in his own grey style,
 All that thou art. Art thou not void of guile, 53
 A lovely soul formed to be blest and bless?
 A well of sealed and secret happiness,
 Whose waters like blithe light and music are,
 Vanquishing dissonance and gloom? A Star 60
 Which moves not in the moving Heavens, alone?
 A smile amid dark frowns? a gentle tone
 Amid rude voices? a belovèd light?
 A Solitude, a Refuge, a Delight?
 A Lute, which those whom love has taught to play 65
 Make music on, to soothe the roughest day
 And lull fond grief asleep? a buried treasure?
 A cradle of young thoughts of wingless pleasure?
 A violet-shrouded grave of Woe?—I measure
 The world of fancies, seeking one like thee, 70
 And find—alas! mine own infirmity.

She met me, Stranger, upon life's rough way,
 And lured me towards sweet Death; as Night by Day,
 Winter by Spring, or Sorrow by swift Hope,
 Led into light, life, peace. An antelope, 75
 In the suspended impulse of its lightness,
 Were less ætherially light: the brightness
 Of her divinest presence trembles through
 Her limbs, as underneath a cloud of dew
 Embodied in the windless Heaven of June 80
 Amid the splendour-wingèd stars, the Moon
 Burns, inextinguishably beautiful:
 And from her lips, as from a hyacinth full
 Of honey-dew, a liquid murmur drops,
 Killing the sense with passion; sweet as stops 85
 Of planetary music heard in trance.
 In her mild lights the starry spirits dance,
 The sun-beams of those wells which ever leap
 Under the lightnings of the soul—too deep
 For the brief fathom-line of thought or sense. 90
 The glory of her being, issuing thence,

Stains the dead, blank, cold air with a warm shade
 Of unentangled intermixture, made
 By Love, of light and motion: one intense
 Diffusion, one serene Omnipresence, 95
 Whose flowing outlines mingle in their flowing
 Around her cheeks and utmost fingers glowing
 With the unintermitted blood, which there
 Quivers, (as in a fleece of snow-like air
 The crimson pulse of living morning quiver,) 100
 Continuously prolonged, and ending never,
 Till they are lost, and in that Beauty furled
 Which penetrates and clasps and fills the world;
 Scarce visible from extreme loveliness.
 Warm fragrance seems to fall from her light dress 105
 And her loose hair; and where some heavy tress
 The air of her own speed has disentwined,
 The sweetness seems to satiate the faint wind;
 And in the soul a wild odour is felt,
 Beyond the sense, like fiery dews that melt 110
 Into the bosom of a frozen bud.—
 See where she stands! a mortal shape indued
 With love and life and light and deity,
 And motion which may change but cannot die;
 An image of some bright Eternity; 115
 A shadow of some golden dream; a Splendour
 Leaving the third sphere pilotless; a tender
 Reflection of the eternal Moon of Love
 Under whose motions life's dull billows move;
 A Metaphor of Spring and Youth and Morning; 120
 A Vision like incarnate April, warning,
 With smiles and tears, Frost the Anatomy
 Into his summer grave.

Ah, woe is me!
 What have I dared? where am I lifted? how
 Shall I descend, and perish not? I know 125
 That Love makes all things equal: I have heard
 By mine own heart this joyous truth averred:
 The spirit of the worm beneath the sod
 In love and worship, blends itself with God.

Spouse! Sister! Angel! Pilot of the Fate 130
 Whose course has been so starless! O too late
 Belovèd! O too soon adored, by me!
 For in the fields of immortality
 My spirit should at first have worshipped thine,
 A divine presence in a place divine; 135
 Or should have moved beside it on this earth,
 A shadow of that substance, from its birth;
 But not as now:---I love thee; yes, I feel
 That on the fountain of my heart a seal 140
 Is set, to keep its waters pure and bright
 For thee, since in those *tears* thou hast delight.
 We—are we not formed, as notes of music are,
 For one another, though dissimilar;
 Such difference without discord, as can make
 Those sweetest sounds, in which all spirits shake 145
 As trembling leaves in a continuous air?

Thy wisdom speaks in me, and bids me dare
 Beacon the rocks on which high hearts are wreckt.
 I never was attached to that great sect,
 Whose doctrine is, that each one should select 150
 Out of the crowd a mistress or a friend,
 And all the rest, though fair and wise, commend
 To cold oblivion, though it is in the code
 Of modern morals, and the beaten road
 Which those poor slaves with weary footsteps tread, 155
 Who travel to their home among the dead
 By the broad highway of the world, and so
 With one chained friend, perhaps a jealous foe,
 The dreariest and the longest journey go.

True Love in this differs from gold and clay, 160
 That to divide is not to take away.
 Love is like understanding, that grows bright,
 Gazing on many truths; 'tis like thy light,
 Imagination! which from earth and sky,
 And from the depths of human phantasy, 165
 As from a thousand prisms and mirrors, fills
 The Universe with glorious beams, and kills

Error, the worm, with many a sun-like arrow
 Of its reverberated lightning. Narrow
 The heart that loves, the brain that contemplates, 170
 The life that wears, the spirit that creates
 One object, and one form, and builds thereby
 A sepulchre for its eternity.

Mind from its object differs most in this:
 Evil from good; misery from happiness; 175
 The baser from the nobler; the impure
 And frail, from what is clear and must endure.
 If you divide suffering and dross, you may
 Diminish till it is consumed away;
 If you divide pleasure and love and thought, 180
 Each part exceeds the whole; and we know not
 How much, while any yet remains unshared,
 Of pleasure may be gained, of sorrow spared:
 This truth is that deep well, whence sages draw
 The unenvied light of hope; the eternal law 185
 By which those live, to whom this world of life
 Is as a garden ravaged, and whose strife
 Tills for the promise of a later birth
 The wilderness of this Elysian earth.

There was a Being whom my spirit oft 190
 Met on its visioned wanderings, far aloft,
 In the clear golden prime of my youth's dawn,
 Upon the fairy isles of sunny lawn,
 Amid the enchanted mountains, and the caves
 Of divine sleep, and on the air-like waves 195
 Of wonder-level dream, whose tremulous floor
 Paved her light steps;—on an imagined shore,
 Under the grey beak of some promontory
 She met me, robed in such exceeding glory,
 That I beheld her not. In solitudes 200
 Her voice came to me through the whispering woods,
 And from the fountains, and the odours deep
 Of flowers, which, like lips murmuring in their sleep
 Of the sweet kisses which had lulled them there,
 Breathed but of *her* to the enamoured air; 205

And from the breezes whether low or loud,
 And from the rain of every passing cloud,
 And from the singing of the summer-birds,
 And from all sounds, all silence. In the words
 Of antique verse and high romance,—in form, 210
 Sound, colour—in whatever checks that Storm
 Which with the shattered present chokes the past;
 And in that best philosophy, whose taste
 Makes this cold common hell, our life, a doom
 As glorious as a fiery martyrdom; 215
 Her Spirit was the harmony of truth.—

Then, from the caverns of my dreamy youth
 I sprang, as one sandalled with plumes of fire,
 And towards the loadstar of my one desire,
 I flitted, like a dizzy moth, whose flight 220
 Is as a dead leaf's in the owlet light,
 When it would seek in Hesper's setting sphere
 A radiant death, a fiery sepulchre,
 As if it were a lamp of earthly flame.—
 But She, whom prayers or tears then could not tame,
 Past, like a God throned on a wingèd planet, 226
 Whose burning plumes to tenfold swiftness fan it,
 Into the dreary cone of our life's shade;
 And as a man with mighty loss dismayed,
 I would have followed, though the grave between 230
 Yawned like a gulf whose spectres are unseen:
 When a voice said:—"O Thou of hearts the weakest,
 "The phantom is beside thee whom thou seekest."
 Then I—"where?" the world's echo answered "where!"
 And in that silence, and in my despair, 235
 I questioned every tongueless wind that flew
 Over my tower of mourning, if it knew
 Whither 'twas fled, this soul out of my soul;
 And murmured names and spells which have controul 240
 Over the sightless tyrants of our fate;
 But neither prayer nor verse could dissipate
 The night which closed on her; nor uncreate
 That world within this Chaos, mine and me,
 Of which she was the veiled Divinity,

The world I say of thoughts that worshipped her: 245
And therefore I went forth, with hope and fear
And every gentle passion sick to death,
Feeding my course with expectation's breath,
Into the wintry forest of our life;
And struggling through its error with vain strife, 250
And stumbling in my weakness and my haste,
And half bewildered by new forms, I past
Seeking among those untaught foresters
If I could find one form resembling hers,
In which she might have masked herself from me. 255
There,—One, whose voice was venom'd melody
Sate by a well, under blue night-shade bowers;
The breath of her false mouth was like faint flowers,
Her touch was as electric poison,—flame
Out of her looks into my vitals came, 260
And from her living cheeks and bosom flew
A killing air, which pierced like honey-dew
Into the core of my green heart, and lay
Upon its leaves; until, as hair grown grey
O'er a young brow, they hid its unblown prime 265
With ruins of unseasonable time.

In many mortal forms I rashly sought
The shadow of that idol of my thought.
And some were fair—but beauty dies away:
Others were wise—but honeyed words betray: 270
And One was true—oh! why not true to me?
Then, as a hunted deer that could not flee,
I turned upon my thoughts, and stood at bay,
Wounded and weak and panting; the cold day
Trembled, for pity of my strife and pain. 275
When, like a noon-day dawn, there shone again
Deliverance. One stood on my path who seemed
As like the glorious shape which I had dreamed,
As is the Moon, whose changes ever run
Into themselves, to the eternal Sun; 280
The cold chaste Moon, the Queen of Heaven's bright isles,
Who makes all beautiful on which she smiles,
That wandering shrine of soft yet icy flame

Which ever is transformed, yet still the same,
 And warms not but illumines. Young and fair 285
 As the descended Spirit of that sphere,
 She hid me, as the Moon may hide the night
 From its own darkness, until all was bright
 Between the Heaven and Earth of my calm mind,
 And, as a cloud charioted by the wind, 290
 She led me to a cave in that wild place,
 And sate beside me, with her downward face
 Illumining my slumbers, like the Moon
 Waxing and waning o'er Endymion.
 And I was laid asleep, spirit and limb, 295
 And all my being became bright or dim
 As the Moon's image in a summer sea,
 According as she smiled or frowned on me;
 And there I lay, within a chaste cold bed:
 Alas, I then was nor alive nor dead:— 300
 For at her silver voice came Death and Life,
 Unmindful each of their accustomed strife,
 Masked like twin babes, a sister and a brother,
 The wandering hopes of one abandoned mother,
 And through the cavern without wings they flew, 305
 And cried "Away, he is not of our crew."
 I wept, and though it be a dream, I weep.

What storms then shook the ocean of my sleep,
 Blotting that Moon, whose pale and waning lips
 Then shrank as in the sickness of eclipse;— 310
 And how my soul was as a lampless sea,
 And who was then its Tempest; and when She,
 The Planet of that hour, was quenched, what frost
 Crept o'er those waters, till from coast to coast
 The moving billows of my being fell 315
 Into a death of ice, immovable;—
 And then—what earthquakes made it gape and split,
 The white Moon smiling all the while on it,
 These words conceal:—If not, each word would be
 The key of staunchless tears. Weep not for me! 320

At length, into the obscure Forest came
 The Vision I had sought through grief and shame.

Athwart that wintry wilderness of thorns
 Flashed from her motion splendour like the Morn's,
 And from her presence life was radiated 325
 Through the grey earth and branches bare and dead ;
 So that her way was paved, and roofed above
 With flowers as soft as thoughts of budding love ;
 And music from her respiration spread
 Like light,—all other sounds were penetrated 330
 By the small, still, sweet spirit of that sound,
 So that the savage winds hung mute around ;
 And odours warm and fresh fell from her hair
 Dissolving the dull cold in the frore air :
 Soft as an Incarnation of the Sun, 335
 When light is changed to love, this glorious One
 Floated into the cavern where I lay,
 And called my Spirit, and the dreaming clay
 Was lifted by the thing that dreamed below
 As smoke by fire, and in her beauty's glow 340
 I stood, and felt the dawn of my long night
 Was penetrating me with living light :
 I knew it was the Vision veiled from me
 So many years—that it was Emily.

Twin Spheres of light who rule this passive Earth,
 This world of love, this *me* ; and into birth 345
 Awaken all its fruits and flowers, and dart
 Magnetic might into its central heart ;
 And lift its billows and its mists, and guide
 By everlasting laws, each wind and tide 350
 To its fit cloud, and its appointed cave ;
 And lull its storms, each in the craggy grave
 Which was its cradle, luring to faint bowers
 The armies of the rain-bow-wingèd showers ; 354
 And, as those married lights, which from the towers
 Of Heaven look forth and fold the wandering globe
 In liquid sleep and splendour, as a robe ;
 And all their many-mingled influence blend,
 If equal, yet unlike, to one sweet end ;—
 So ye, bright regents, with alternate sway 360
 Govern my sphere of being, night and day !

Thou, not disdaining even a borrowed might;
 Thou, not eclipsing a remoter light;
 And, through the shadow of the seasons three,
 From Spring to Autumn's sere maturity, 365
 Light it into the Winter of the tomb,
 Where it may ripen to a brighter bloom.
 Thou too, O Comet beautiful and fierce,
 Who drew the heart of this frail Universe
 Towards thine own; till, wreckt in that convulsion, 370
 Alternating attraction and repulsion,
 Thine went astray and that was rent in twain;
 Oh, float into our azure heaven again!
 Be there love's folding-star at thy return;
 The living Sun will feed thee from its urn 375
 Of golden fire; the Moon will veil her horn
 In thy last smiles; adoring Even and Morn
 Will worship thee with incense of calm breath
 And lights and shadows; as the star of Death
 And Birth is worshipped by those sisters wild 380
 Called Hope and Fear—upon the heart are piled
 Their offerings,—of this sacrifice divine
 A World shall be the altar.

Lady mine,

Scorn not these flowers of thought, the fading birth
 Which from its heart of hearts that plant puts forth
 Whose fruit, made perfect by thy sunny eyes, 386
 Will be as of the trees of Paradise.

The day is come, and thou wilt fly with me.
 To whatsoever of dull mortality
 Is mine, remain a vestal sister still; 390
 To the intense, the deep, the imperishable,
 Not mine but me, henceforth be thou united
 Even as a bride, delighting and delighted.
 The hour is come:---the destined Star has risen
 Which shall descend upon a vacant prison. 395
 The walls are high, the gates are strong, thick set
 The sentinels---but true love never yet
 Was thus constrained: it overleaps all fence:
 Like lightning, with invisible violence

Piercing its continents; like Heaven's free breath, 400
 Which he who grasps can hold not; liker Death,
 Who rides upon a thought, and makes his way
 Through temple, tower, and palace, and the array
 Of arms: more strength has Love than he or they;
 For it can burst his charnel, and make free 405
 The limbs in chains, the heart in agony,
 The soul in dust and chaos.

Emily,

A ship is floating in the harbour now,
 A wind is hovering o'er the mountain's brow;
 There is a path on the sea's azure floor, 410
 No keel has ever ploughed that path before;
 The halcyons brood around the foamless isles;
 The treacherous Ocean has forsworn its wiles;
 The merry mariners are bold and free:
 Say, my heart's sister, wilt thou sail with me? 415
 Our bark is as an albatross, whose nest
 Is a far Eden of the purple East;
 And we between her wings will sit, while Night
 And Day, and Storm, and Calm, pursue their flight,
 Our ministers, along the boundless Sea, 420
 Treading each other's heels, unheededly.
 It is an isle under Ionian skies,
 Beautiful as a wreck of Paradise,
 And, for the harbours are not safe and good,
 This land would have remained a solitude 425
 But for some pastoral people native there,
 Who from the Elysian, clear, and golden air
 Draw the last spirit of the age of gold,
 Simple and spirited; innocent and bold.
 The blue Ægean girds this chosen home, 430
 With ever-changing sound and light and foam,
 Kissing the sifted sands, and caverns hoar;
 And all the winds wandering along the shore
 Undulate with the undulating tide:
 There are thick woods where sylvan forms abide; 435
 And many a fountain, rivulet, and pond,
 As clear as elemental diamond,
 Or serene morning air; and far beyond,

The mossy tracks made by the goats and deer
 (Which the rough shepherd treads but once a year,) 440
 Pierce into glades, caverns, and bowers, and halls
 Built round with ivy, which the waterfalls
 Illumining, with sound that never fails
 Accompany the noon-day nightingales;
 And all the place is peopled with sweet airs; 445
 The light clear element which the isle wears
 Is heavy with the scent of lemon-flowers,
 Which floats like mist laden with unseen showers
 And falls upon the eye-lids like faint sleep;
 And from the moss violets and jonquils peep, 450
 And dart their arrowy odour through the brain
 Till you might faint with that delicious pain.
 And every motion, odour, beam, and tone,
 With that deep music is in unison:
 Which is a soul within the soul---they seem 455
 Like echoes of an antenatal dream.—
 It is an isle 'twixt Heaven, Air, Earth, and Sea,
 Cradled, and hung in clear tranquillity;
 Bright as that wandering Eden Lucifer,
 Washed by the soft blue Oceans of young air. 460
 It is a favoured place. Famine or Blight,
 Pestilence, War and Earthquake, never light
 Upon its mountain-peaks; blind vultures, they
 Sail onward far upon their fatal way:
 The winged storms, chaunting their thunder-psalm 465
 To other lands, leave azure chasms of calm
 Over this isle, or weep themselves in dew,
 From which its fields and woods ever renew
 Their green and golden immortality.
 And from the sea there rise, and from the sky 470
 There fall, clear exhalations, soft and bright,
 Veil after veil, each hiding some delight,
 Which Sun or Moon or zephyr draw aside,
 Till the isle's beauty, like a naked bride
 Glowing at once with love and loveliness, 475
 Blushes and trembles at its own excess:
 Yet, like a buried lamp, a Soul no less
 Burns in the heart of this delicious isle,

An atom of th' Eternal, whose own smile
 Unfolds itself, and may be felt, not seen 480
 O'er the grey rocks, blue waves, and forests green,
 Filling their bare and void interstices.—
 But the chief marvel of the wilderness
 Is a lone dwelling, built by whom or how
 None of the rustic island-people know: 485
 'Tis not a tower of strength, though with its height
 It overtops the woods; but, for delight,
 Some wise and tender Ocean-King, ere crime
 Had been invented, in the world's young prime,
 Reared it, a wonder of that simple time, 490
 An envy of the isles, a pleasure-house
 Made sacred to his sister and his spouse.
 It scarce seems now a wreck of human art,
 But, as it were Titanic; in the heart
 Of Earth having assumed its form, then grown 495
 Out of the mountains, from the living stone,
 Lifting itself in caverns light and high:
 For all the antique and learned imagery
 Has been erased, and in the place of it
 The ivy and the wild-vine interknit 500
 The volumes of their many twining stems;
 Parasite flowers illume with dewy gems
 The lampless halls, and when they fade, the sky
 Peeps through their winter-woof of tracery
 With Moon-light patches, or star atoms keen, 505
 Or fragments of the day's intense serene;—
 Working mosaic on their Parian floors.
 And, day and night, aloof, from the high towers
 And terraces, the Earth and Ocean seem
 To sleep in one another's arms, and dream 510
 Of waves, flowers, clouds, woods, rocks, and all that we
 Read in their smiles, and call reality.

This isle and house are mine, and I have vowed
 Thee to be lady of the solitude.---
 And I have fitted up some chambers there 515
 Looking towards the golden Eastern air,
 And level with the living winds, which flow

Like waves above the living waves below.---
 I have sent books and music there, and all
 Those instruments with which high spirits call 520
 The future from its cradle, and the past
 Out of its grave, and make the present last
 In thoughts and joys which sleep, but cannot die,
 Folded within their own eternity.
 Our simple life wants little, and true taste 525
 Hires not the pale drudge Luxury, to waste
 The scene it would adorn, and therefore still,
 Nature with all her children, haunts the hill.
 The ring-dove, in the embowering ivy, yet
 Keeps up her love-lament, and the owls flit 530
 Round the evening tower, and the young stars glance
 Between the quick bats in their twilight dance;
 The spotted deer bask in the fresh moon-light
 Before our gate, and the slow, silent night
 Is measured by the pants of their calm sleep. 535
 Be this our home in life, and when years heap
 Their withered hours, like leaves, on our decay,
 Let us become the over-hanging day,
 The living soul of this Elysian isle,
 Conscious, inseparable, one. Meanwhile 540
 We two will rise, and sit, and walk together,
 Under the roof of blue Ionian weather,
 And wander in the meadows, or ascend
 The mossy mountains, where the blue heavens bend
 With lightest winds, to touch their paramour; 545
 Or linger, where the pebble-paven shore,
 Under the quick, faint kisses of the sea
 Trembles and sparkles as with ecstasy,---
 Possessing and possest by all that is
 Within that calm circumference of bliss, 550
 And by each other, till to love and live
 Be one: --- or, at the noontide hour, arrive
 Where some old cavern hoar seems yet to keep
 The moonlight of the expired night asleep,
 Through which the awakened day can never peep; 555
 A veil for our seclusion, close as Night's,
 Where secure sleep may kill thine innocent lights;

Sleep, the fresh dew of languid love, the rain
 Whose drops quench kisses till they burn again.
 And we will talk, until thought's melody 560
 Become too sweet for utterance, and it die
 In words, to live again in looks, which dart
 With thrilling tone into the voiceless heart,
 Harmonizing silence without a sound.
 Our breath shall intermix, our bosoms bound, 565
 And our veins beat together; and our lips
 With other eloquence than words, eclipse
 The soul that burns between them, and the wells
 Which boil under our being's inmost cells,
 The fountains of our deepest life, shall be 570
 Confused in passion's golden purity,
 As mountain-springs under the morning Sun.
 We shall become the same, we shall be one
 Spirit within two frames, oh! wherefore two?
 One passion in twin-hearts, which grows and grew, 575
 Till like two meteors of expanding flame,
 Those spheres instinct with it become the same,
 Touch, mingle, are transfigured; ever still
 Burning, yet ever inconsumable:
 In one another's substance finding food, 580
 Like flames too pure and light and unimbu'd
 To nourish their bright lives with baser prey,
 Which point to Heaven and cannot pass away:
 One hope within two wills, one will beneath
 Two overshadowing minds, one life, one death, 585
 One Heaven, one Hell, one immortality,
 And one annihilation. Woe is me!
 The wing'd words on which my soul would pierce
 Into the height of love's rare Universe,
 Are chains of lead around its flight of fire.--- 590
 I pant, I sink, I tremble, I expire!

Weak Verses, go, kneel at your Sovereign's feet,
 And say:—"We are the masters of thy slave;
 "What wouldest thou with us and ours and thine?"
 Then call your sisters from Oblivion's cave, 595
 All singing loud: "Love's very pain is sweet.

" But its reward is in the world divine
 " Which, if not here, it builds beyond the grave."
 So shall ye live when I am there. Then haste
 Over the hearts of men, until ye meet 600
 Marina, Vanna, Primus, and the rest,
 And bid them love each other and be blest:
 And leave the troop which errs, and which reproves,
 And come and be my guest, --- for I am Love's.

STUDIES FOR EPIPSYCHIDION, AND CANCELLED PASSAGES.

Here, my dear friend, is a new book for you;
 I have already dedicated two
 To other friends, one female and one male,—
 What you are, is a thing that I must veil;
 What can this be to those who praise or rail? 5
 I never was attached to that great sect
 Whose doctrine is that each one should select
 Out of the world a mistress or a friend,
 And all the rest, though fair and wise, commend
 To cold oblivion—though 'tis in the code 10
 Of modern morals, and the beaten road
 Which those poor slaves with weary footsteps tread
 Who travel to their home among the dead
 By the broad highway of the world—and so
 With one sad friend, and many a jealous foe, 15
 The dreariest and the longest journey go.

Free love has this, different from gold and clay,
 That to divide is not to take away.
 Like ocean, which the general north wind breaks
 Into ten thousand waves, and each one makes 20
 A mirror of the moon—like some great glass,
 Which did distort whatever form might pass,
 Dashed into fragments by a playful child,
 Which then reflects its eyes and forehead mild;
 Giving for one, which it could ne'er express, 25
 A thousand images of loveliness,

If I were one whom the loud world held wise,
 I should disdain to quote authorities
 In commendation of this kind of love:—
 Why there is first the God in heaven above, 30
 Who wrote a book called Nature, 'tis to be
 Reviewed, I hear, in the next Quarterly;
 And Socrates, the Jesus Christ of Greece,
 And Jesus Christ himself did never cease
 To urge all living things to love each other, 35
 And to forgive their mutual faults, and smother
 The Devil of disunion in their souls.

* * * * *

I love you!—Listen, O embodied Ray
 Of the great Brightness; I must pass away
 While you remain, and these light words must be 40
 Tokens by which you may remember me.
 Start not—the thing you are is unbetrayed,
 If you are human, and if but the shade
 Of some sublimer spirit.

* * * * *

And as to friend or mistress, 'tis a form; 45
 Perhaps I wish you were one. Some declare
 You a familiar spirit, as you are;
 Others with a more inhuman
 Hint that, though not my wife, you are a woman,
 What is the colour of your eyes and hair? 50
 Why, if you were a lady, it were fair
 The world should know—but, as I am afraid,
 The Quarterly would bait you if betrayed;
 And if, as it will be sport to see them stumble
 Over all sorts of scandals, hear them innumble 55
 Their litany of curses—some guess right,
 And others swear you're a Hermaphrodite;
 Like that sweet marble monster of both sexes,
 With looks so sweet and gentle that it vexes
 The very soul that the soul is gone 60
 Which lifted from her limbs the veil of stone.

* * * * *

It is a sweet thing, friendship, a dear balm,
 A happy and auspicious bird of calm,

Which rides o'er life's ever tumultuous Ocean;
 A God that broods o'er chaos in commotion; 65
 A flower which fresh as Lapland roses are,
 Lifts its bold head into the world's frore air,
 And blooms most radiantly when others die,
 Health, hope, and youth, and brief prosperity;
 And with the light and odour of its bloom, 70
 Shining within the dungeon and the tomb;
 Whose coming is as light and music are
 'Mid dissonance and gloom—a star
 Which moves not 'mid the moving heavens alone—
 A smile among dark frowns—a gentle tone 75
 Among rude voices, a beloved light,
 A solitude, a refuge, a delight.
 If I had but a friend! Why, I have three
 Even by my own confession; there may be
 Some more, for what I know, for 'tis my mind 80
 To call my friends all who are wise and kind,—
 And these, Heaven knows, at best are very few;
 But none can ever be more dear than you.
 Why should they be? My muse has lost her wings,
 Or like a dying swan who soars and sings, 85
 I should describe you in heroic style,
 But as it is, are you not void of guile?
 A lovely soul, formed to be blest and bless:
 A well of sealed and secret happiness;
 A lute which those whom Love has taught to play, 90
 Make music on to cheer the roughest day,
 And enchant sadness till it sleeps?

* * * * *

To the oblivion whither I and thou,
 All loving and all lovely, hasten now
 With steps, ah, too unequal! may we meet 95
 In one Elysium or one winding sheet!

If any should be curious to discover
 Whether to you I am a friend or lover,
 Let them read Shakspeare's sonnets, taking thence
 A whetstone for their dull intelligence 100
 That tears and will not cut, or let them guess

How Diotima, the wise prophetess,
 Instructed the instructor, and why he
 Rebuked the infant spirit of melody
 On Agathon's sweet lips, which as he spoke 105
 Was as the lovely star when morn has broke
 The roof of darkness, in the golden dawn,
 Half-hidden, and yet beautiful.

I'll pawn
 My hopes of Heaven—you know what they are worth—
 That the presumptuous pedagogues of Earth, 110
 If they could tell the riddle offered here
 Would scorn to be, or being to appear
 What now they seem and are—but let them chide,
 They have few pleasures in the world beside;
 Perhaps we should be dull were we not chidden, 115
 Paradise fruits are sweetest when forbidden.
 Folly can season Wisdom, Hatred Love.

* * * * *

Farewell, if it can be to say farewell
 To those who—

* * * * *

I will not, as most dedicators do, 120
 Assure myself and all the world and you,
 That you are faultless—would to God they were
 Who taunt me with your love! I then should wear
 These heavy chains of life with a light spirit,
 And would to God I were, or even as near it 125
 As you, dear heart. Alas! what are we? Clouds
 Driven by the wind in warring multitudes,
 Which rain into the bosom of the earth,
 And rise again, and in our death and birth,
 And through our restless life, take as from heaven 130
 Hues which are not our own, but which are given,
 And then withdrawn, and with inconstant glance
 Flash from the spirit to the countenance.
 There is a Power, a Love, a Joy, a God
 Which makes in mortal hearts its brief abode, 135
 A Pythian exhalation, which inspires
 Love, only love—a wind which o'er the wires
 Of the soul's giant harp—

There is a mood which language faints beneath;
 You feel it striding, as Almighty Death 140
 His bloodless steed.

* * * * *

And what is that most brief and bright delight
 Which rushes through the touch and through the sight,
 And stands before the spirit's inmost throne,
 A naked Seraph? None hath ever known. 145
 Its birth is darkness, and its growth desire;
 Untameable and fleet and fierce as fire,
 Not to be touched but to be felt alone,
 It fills the world with glory—and is gone.

* * * * *

It floats with rainbow pinions o'er the stream 150
 Of life, which flows, like a dream
 Into the light of morning, to the grave
 As to an ocean.

* * * * *

What is that joy which serene infancy
 Perceives not, as the hours content them by, 155
 Each in a chain of blossoms, yet enjoys
 The shapes of this new world, in giant toys
 Wrought by the busy ever new?
 Remembrance borrows Fancy's glass, to show
 These forms more sincere 160
 Than now they are, than then, perhaps, they were.
 When everything familiar seemed to be
 Wonderful, and the immortality
 Of this great world, which all things must inherit,
 Was felt as one with the awakening spirit, 165
 Unconscious of itself, and of the strange
 Distinctions which in its proceeding change
 It feels and knows, and mourns as if each were
 A desolation.

* * * * *

Were it not a sweet refuge, Emily, 170
 For all those exiles from the dull insane
 Who vex this pleasant world with pride and pain,
 For all that band of sister-spirits known
 To one another by a voiceless tone?

ADON AIS :

AN ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF JOHN KEATS, AUTHOR OF ENDYMION, HYPERION &c.

Ἀστὴρ πρὶν μὲν ἔλαμπες ἐνὶ ζώοισιν εἶδος.
Νῦν δὲ θανὼν, λαμπρὸς ἔσπερος ἐν φθίμενοις.
PLATO.

PREFACE.

Φάρμακον ἦλθε, Βίω, ποτὶ σὸν στομα, φάρμακον εἶδες·
Πῶς τευ τοῖς χεῖλεσσι ποτεδραμε, κοῦκ ἐγλυκανθῇ;
Τὸ δὲ βροτὸς τοσσούτον ἀνάμερος, ἢ κερασάι τοι,
Ἦ δοῦναι λαλέοντι το φάρμακον; ἔκφυγεν ὤδαν.
MOSCHUS, ΕΠΙΤΑΦΙ. ΒΙΟΝ.

It is my intention to subjoin to the London edition of this poem, a criticism upon the claims of its lamented object to be classed among the writers of the highest genius who have adorned our age. My known repugnance to the narrow principles of taste on which several of his earlier compositions were modelled, prove, at least that I am an impartial judge. I consider the fragment of Hyperion, as second to nothing that was ever produced by a writer of the same years.

John Keats died at Rome of a consumption, in his twenty-fourth year, on the — of — 1821; and was buried in the romantic and lonely cemetery of the protestants in that city, under the pyramid which is the tomb of Cestius, and the massy walls and towers, now mouldering and desolate, which formed the circuit of ancient Rome. The cemetery is an open space among the ruins covered in winter with violets and daisies. It might make one in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place.

The genius of the lamented person to whose memory I have dedicated these unworthy verses, was not less delicate and fragile than it was beautiful; and where cankerworms abound, what wonder, if it's young flower was blighted in the bud? The savage criticism on his *Endymion*, which appeared in the *Quarterly Review*, produced the most violent effect on his susceptible mind; the agitation thus originated ended in the rupture of a blood-vessel in the lungs; a rapid consumption ensued, and the succeeding acknowledgments from more candid critics, of the true greatness of his powers, were ineffectual to heal the wound thus wantonly inflicted.

It may be well said, that these wretched men know not what they do. They scatter their insults and their slanders without heed as to whether the poisoned shaft lights on a heart made callous by many blows, or one, like Keats's composed of more penetrable stuff. One of their associates, is, to my knowledge, a most base and unprincipled calumniator. As to "*Endymion*"; was it a poem, whatever might be it's defects, to be treated contemptuously by those who had celebrated with various degrees of complacency and panegyric, "*Paris*," and "*Woman*," and a "*Syrian Tale*," and Mrs. Lefanu, and Mr. Barrett, and Mr. Howard Payne, and a long list of the illustrious obscure? Are these the men, who in their venal good nature, presumed to draw a parallel between the Rev. Mr. Milman and Lord Byron? What gnat did they strain at here, after having swallowed all those camels? Against what woman taken in adultery, dares the foremost of these literary prostitutes to cast his opprobrious stone? Miserable man! you, one of the meanest, have wantonly defaced one of the noblest specimens of the workmanship of God. Nor shall it be your excuse, that, murderer as you are, you have spoken daggers, but used none.

The circumstances of the closing scene of poor Keats's life were not made known to me until the *Elegy* was ready for the press. I am given to understand that the wound which his sensitive spirit had received from the criticism of *Endymion*, was exasperated by the bitter sense of unrequited benefits; the poor fellow seems to have been hooted from the stage of life, no less by those on whom he had wasted

the promise of his genius, than those on whom he had lavished his fortune and his care. He was accompanied to Rome, and attended in his last illness by Mr. Severn, a young artist of the highest promise, who, I have been informed "almost risked his own life, and sacrificed every prospect to unwearied attendance upon his dying friend." Had I known these circumstances before the completion of my poem, I should have been tempted to add my feeble tribute of applause to the more solid recompense which the virtuous man finds in the recollection of his own motives. Mr. Severn can dispense with a reward from "such stuff as dreams are made of." His conduct is a golden augury of the success of his future career—may the unextinguished Spirit of his illustrious friend animate the creations of his pencil, and plead against Oblivion for his name!

ADONAIS.

I.

I WEEP for Adonais—he is dead!
O, weep for Adonais! though our tears
Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head!
And thou, sad Hour, selected from all years
To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,
And teach them thine own sorrow, say: with me
Died Adonais; till the Future dares
Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be
An echo and a light unto eternity!

II.

Where wert thou mighty Mother, when he lay,
When thy Son lay, pierced by the shaft which flies
In darkness? where was lorn Urania
When Adonais died? With veiled eyes,
'Mid listening Echoes, in her Paradise
She sate, while one, with soft enamoured breath,
Rekindled all the fading melodies,
With which, like flowers that mock the corse beneath,
He had adorned and hid the coming bulk of death.

III.

O, weep for Adonais—he is dead!
 Wake, melancholy Mother, wake and weep!
 Yet wherefore? Quench within their burning bed
 Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep
 Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep;
 For he is gone, where all things wise and fair
 Descend;—oh, dream not that the amorous Deep
 Will yet restore him to the vital air;
 Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our despair.

IV.

Most musical of mourners, weep again!
 Lament anew, Urania!—He died,
 Who was the Sire of an immortal strain,
 Blind, old, and lonely, when his country's pride,
 The priest, the slave, and the liberticide,
 Trampled and mocked with many a loathed rite
 Of lust and blood; he went, unterrified,
 Into the gulf of death; but his clear Sprite
 Yet reigns o'er earth; the third among the sons of light.

V.

Most musical of mourners, weep anew!
 Not all to that bright station dared to climb;
 And happier they their happiness who knew,
 Whose tapers yet burn through that night of time
 In which suns perished; others more sublime,
 Struck by the envious wrath of man or God,
 Have sunk, extinct in their refulgent prime;
 And some yet live, treading the thorny road,
 Which leads, through toil and hate, to Fame's serene abode.

VI.

But now, thy youngest, dearest one has perished,
 The nursling of thy widowhood, who grew,
 Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished,
 And fed with true love tears, instead of dew;
 Most musical of mourners, weep anew!
 Thy extreme hope, the loveliest and the last,
 The bloom, whose petals nipt before they blew
 Died on the promise of the fruit, is waste;
 The broken lily lies—the storm is overpast.

VII.

To that high Capital, where kingly Death
 Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay,
 He came; and bought, with price of purest breath,
 A grave among the eternal.—Come away!
 Haste, while the vault of blue Italian day
 Is yet his fitting charnel-roof! while still
 He lies, as if in dewy sleep he lay;
 Awake him not! surely he takes his fill
 Of deep and liquid rest, forgetful of all ill.

VIII.

He will awake no more, oh, never more!—
 Within the twilight chamber spreads apace,
 The shadow of white Death, and at the door
 Invisible Corruption waits to trace
 His extreme way to her dim dwelling-place;
 The eternal Hunger sits, but pity and awe
 Soothe her pale rage, nor dares she to deface
 So fair a prey, till darkness, and the law
 Of change, shall o'er his sleep the mortal curtain draw.

IX.

O, weep for Adonais!—The quick Dreams,
 The passion-wingèd Ministers of thought,
 Who were his flocks, whom near the living streams
 Of his young spirit he fed, and whom he taught
 The love which was its music, wander not,—
 Wander no more, from kindling brain to brain,
 But droop there, whence they sprung; and mourn their lot
 Round the cold heart, where, after their sweet pain,
 They ne'er will gather strength, or find a home again.

X.

And one with trembling hands clasps his cold head,
 And fans him with her moonlight wings, and cries;
 "Our love, our hope, our sorrow, is not dead;
 "See, on the silken fringe of his faint eyes,
 "Like dew upon a sleeping flower, there lies
 "A tear some Dream has loosened from his brain."
 { Lost Angel of a ruined Paradise!
 She knew not 'twas her own; as with no stain
 She faded, like a cloud which had outwept its rain.

XI.

One from a lucid urn of starry dew
 Washed his light limbs as if embalming them;
 Another clipt her profuse locks, and threw
 The wreath upon him, like an anadem,
 Which frozen tears instead of pearls begem;
 Another in her wilful grief would break
 Her bow and wingèd reeds, as if to stem
 A greater loss with one which was more weak;
 And dull the barbèd fire against his frozen cheek.

XII.

Another Splendour on his mouth alit,
 That mouth, whence it was wont to draw the breath
 Which gave it strength to pierce the guarded wit,
 And pass into the panting heart beneath
 With lightning and with music: the damp death
 Quenched its caress upon his icy lips;
 And, as a dying meteor stains a wreath
 Of moonlight vapour, which the cold night clips,
 It flushed through his pale limbs, and past to its eclipse.

XIII.

And others came . . . Desires and Adorations,
 Wingèd Persuasions and veiled Destinies,
 Splendours, and Glooms, and glimmering Incarnations
 Of hopes and fears, and twilight Phantasies;
 And Sorrow, with her family of Sighs,
 And Pleasure, blind with tears, led by the gleam
 Of her own dying smile instead of eyes,
 Came in slow pomp;—the moving pomp might seem
 Like pageantry of mist on an autumnal stream.

XIV.

All he had loved, and moulded into thought,
 From shape, and hue, and odour, and sweet sound,
 Lamented Adonais. Morning sought
 Her eastern watchtower, and her hair unbound,
 Wet with the tears which should adorn the ground,
 Dimmed the aerial eyes that kindle day;
 Afar the melancholy thunder moaned,
 Pale Ocean in unquiet slumber lay,
 And the wild winds flew round, sobbing in their dismay.

XV.

Lost Echo sits amid the voiceless mountains,
And feeds her grief with his remembered lay,
And will no more reply to winds or fountains,
Or amorous birds perched on the young green spray,
Or herdsman's horn, or bell at closing day;
Since she can mimic not his lips, more dear
Than those for whose disdain she pined away
Into a shadow of all sounds:—a drear
Murmur, between their songs, is all the woodmen hear.

XVI.

Grief made the young Spring wild, and she threw down
Her kindling buds, as if she Autumn were,
Or they dead leaves; since her delight is flown
For whom should she have waked the sullen year?
To Phœbus was not Hyacinth so dear
Nor to himself Narcissus, as to both
Thou Adonais: wan they stand and sere
Amid the faint companions of their youth,
With dew all turned to tears; odour, to sighing ruth.

XVII.

Thy spirit's sister, the lorn nightingale
Mourns not her mate with such melodious pain;
Not so the eagle, who like thee could scale
Heaven, and could nourish in the sun's domain
Her mighty youth with morning, doth complain,
Soaring and screaming round her empty nest,
As Albion wails for thee: the curse of Cain
Light on his head who pierced thy innocent breast,
And scared the angel soul that was its earthly guest!

XVIII.

Ah woe is me! Winter is come and gone,
But grief returns with the revolving year;
The airs and streams renew their joyous tone;
The ants, the bees, the swallows reappear;
Fresh leaves and flowers deck the dead Seasons' bier;
The amorous birds now pair in every brake,
And build their mossy homes in field and brere;
And the green lizard, and the golden snake,
Like unimprisoned flames, out of their trance awake.

XIX.

Through wood and stream and field and hill and Ocean
 A quickening life from the Earth's heart has burst
 As it has ever done, with change and motion,
 From the great morning of the world when first
 God dawned on Chaos; in its stream immersed
 The lamps of Heaven flash with a softer light;
 All baser things pant with life's sacred thirst;
 Diffuse themselves; and spend in love's delight,
 The beauty and the joy of their renewed might.

XX.

The leprous corpse touched by this spirit tender
 Exhales itself in flowers of gentle breath;
 Like incarnations of the stars, when splendour
 Is changed to fragrance, they illumine death
 And mock the merry worm that wakes beneath;
 Nought we know, dies. Shall that alone which knows
 Be as a sword consumed before the sheath
 By sightless lightning?—th' intense atom glows
 A moment, then is quenched in a most cold repose.

XXI.

Alas! that all we loved of him should be,
 But for our grief, as if it had not been,
 And grief itself be mortal! Woe is me!
 Whence are we, and why are we? of what scene
 The actors or spectators? Great and mean
 Meet massed in death, who lends what life must borrow.
 As long as skies are blue, and fields are green,
 Evening must usher night, night urge the morrow,
 Month follow month with woe, and year wake year to sorrow.

XXII.

He will awake no more, oh, never more!
 "Wake thou," cried Misery, "childless Mother, rise
 Out of thy sleep, and slake, in thy heart's core,
 A wound more fierce than his with tears and sighs."
 And all the Dreams that watched Urania's eyes,
 And all the Echoes whom their sister's song
 Had held in holy silence, cried: "Arise!"
 Swift as a Thought by the snake Memory stung,
 From her ambrosial rest the fading Splendour sprung.

XXIII.

She rose like an autumnal Night, that springs
Out of the East, and follows wild and drear
The golden Day, which, on eternal wings,
Even as a ghost abandoning a bier,
Had left the Earth a corpse. Sorrow and fear
So struck, so roused, so rapt Urania;
So saddened round her like an atmosphere
Of stormy mist; so swept her on her way
Even to the mournful place where Adonais lay.

XXIV.

Out of her secret Paradise she sped,
Through camps and cities rough with stone, and steel,
And human hearts, which to her aery tread
Yielding not, wounded the invisible
Palms of her tender feet where'er they fell:
And barbed tongues, and thoughts more sharp than they
Rent the soft Form they never could repel,
Whose sacred blood, like the young tears of May,
Paved with eternal flowers that undeserving way.

XXV.

In the death chamber for a moment Death
Shamed by the presence of that living Might
Blushed to annihilation, and the breath
Revisited those lips, and life's pale light
Flashed through those limbs, so late her dear delight.
"Leave me not wild and drear and comfortless,
"As silent lightning leaves the starless night!
"Leave me not!" cried Urania: her distress
Roused Death: Death rose and smiled, and met her vain caress.

XXVI.

"Stay yet awhile! speak to me once again;
"Kiss me, so long but as a kiss may live;
"And in my heartless breast and burning brain
"That word, that kiss shall all thoughts else survive,
"With food of saddest memory kept alive,
"Now thou art dead, as if it were a part
"Of thee, my Adonais! I would give
"All that I am to be as thou now art!
"But I am chained to Time, and cannot thence depart!

XXVII.

"Oh gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,
 "Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of men
 "Too soon, and with weak hands though mighty heart
 "Dare the unpastured dragon in his den?
 "Defenceless as thou wert, oh where was then
 "Wisdom the mirrored shield, or scorn the spear?
 "Or hadst thou waited the full cycle, when
 "Thy spirit should have filled its crescent sphere,
 "The monsters of life's waste had fled from thee like deer.

XXVIII.

"The herded wolves, bold only to pursue;
 "The obscene ravens, clamorous o'er the dead;
 "The vultures to the conqueror's banner true
 "Who feed where Desolation first has fed,
 "And whose wings rain contagion;—how they fled,
 "When like Apollo, from his golden bow,
 "The Pythian of the age one arrow sped
 "And smiled!—The spoilers tempt no second blow,
 "They fawn on the proud feet that spurn them lying low.

XXIX.

"The sun comes forth, and many reptiles spawn;
 "He sets, and each ephemeral insect then
 "Is gathered into death without a dawn,
 "And the immortal stars awake again;
 "So is it in the world of living men:
 "A godlike mind soars forth, in its delight
 "Making earth bare and veiling heaven, and when
 "It sinks, the swarms that dimmed or shared its light
 "Leave to its kindred lamps the spirit's awful night."

XXX.

Thus ceased she: and the mountain shepherds came,
 Their garlands sere, their magic mantles rent;
 The Pilgrim of Eternity, whose fame
 Over his living head like Heaven is bent,
 An early but enduring monument,
 Came, veiling all the lightnings of his song
 In sorrow; from her wilds Ierne sent
 The sweetest lyrist of her saddest wrong,
 And love taught grief to fall like music from his tongue.

XXXI.

Midst others of less note, came one frail Form,
A phantom among men; companionless
As the last cloud of an expiring storm
Whose thunder is its knell; he, as I guess,
Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness,
Actæon-like, and now he fled astray
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,
And his own thoughts, along that rugged way,
Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their prey.

XXXII.

A pardlike Spirit beautiful and swift—
A Love in desolation masked;—a Power
Girt round with weakness;—it can scarce uplift
The weight of the superincumbent hour;
It is a dying lamp, a falling shower,
A breaking billow;—even whilst we speak
Is it not broken? On the withering flower
The killing sun smiles brightly: on a cheek
The life can burn in blood, even while the heart may break.

XXXIII.

His head was bound with pansies overblown,
And faded violets, white, and pied, and blue;
And a light spear topped with a cypress cone,
Round whose rude shaft dark ivy tresses grew
Yet dripping with the forest's noonday dew,
Vibrated, as the ever-beating heart
Shook the weak hand that grasped it; of that crew
He came the last, neglected and apart;
A herd-abandoned deer struck by the hunter's dart.

XXXIV.

All stood aloof, and at his partial moan
Smiled through their tears; well knew that gentle band
Who in another's fate now wept his own;
As in the accents of an unknown land,
He sung new sorrow; sad Urania scanned
The Stranger's mien, and murmured: "who art thou?"
He answered not, but with a sudden hand
Made bare his branded and ensanguined brow,
Which was like Cain's or Christ's—Oh! that it should
be so!

XXXV.

What softer voice is hushed over the dead?
Athwart what brow is that dark mantle thrown?
What form leans sadly o'er the white death-bed,
In mockery of monumental stone,
The heavy heart heaving without a moan?
If it be He, who, gentlest of the wise,
Taught, soothed, loved, honoured the departed one;
Let me not vex, with inharmonious sighs
The silence of that heart's accepted sacrifice.

XXXVI.

Our Adonais has drunk poison—oh!
What deaf and viperous murderer could crown
Life's early cup with such a draught of woe?
The nameless worm would now itself disown:
It felt, yet could escape the magic tone
Whose prelude held all envy, hate, and wrong,
But what was howling in one breast alone,
Silent with expectation of the song,
Whose master's hand is cold, whose silver lyre unstrung.

XXXVII.

Live thou, whose infamy is not thy fame!
Live! fear no heavier chastisement from me,
Thou noteless blot on a remembered name!
But be thyself, and know thyself to be!
And ever at thy season be thou free
To spill the venom when thy fangs o'erflow:
Remorse and Self-contempt shall cling to thee;
Hot Shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,
And like a beaten hound tremble thou shalt—as now.

XXXVIII.

Nor let us weep that our delight is fled
Far from these carrion kites that scream below;
He wakes or sleeps with the enduring dead;
Thou canst not soar where he is sitting now.—
Dust to the dust! but the pure spirit shall flow
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
A portion of the Eternal, which must glow
Through time and change, unquenchably the same,
Whilst thy cold embers choke the sordid hearth of shame.

XXXIX.

Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—
He hath awakened from the dream of life—
'Tis we, who lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
And in mad trance, strike with our spirit's knife
Invulnerable nothings.—*We* decay
Like corpses in a charnel; fear and grief
Convulse us and consume us day by day,
And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living clay.

XL.

He has outsoared the shadow of our night;
Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown grey in vain;
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

XLI.

He lives, he wakes—'tis Death is dead, not he;
Mourn not for Adonais.—Thou young Dawn
Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee
The spirit thou lamentest is not gone;
Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan!
Cease ye faint flowers and fountains, and thou Air
Which like a mourning veil thy scarf hadst thrown
O'er the abandoned Earth, now leave it bare
Even to the joyous stars which smile on it's despair!

XLII.

He is made one with Nature: there is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird;
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own;
Which wields the world with never wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

XLIII.

He is a portion of the loveliness
 Which once he made more lovely: he doth bear
 His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress
 Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there,
 All new successions to the forms they wear;
 Torturing th' unwilling dross that checks its flight
 To its own likeness, as each mass may bear;
 And bursting in its beauty and its might
 From trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light.

XLIV.

The splendours of the firmament of time
 May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not;
 Like stars to their appointed height they climb
 And death is a low mist which cannot blot
 The brightness it may veil. When lofty thought
 Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
 And love and life contend in it, for what
 Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there
 And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air.

XLV.

The inheritors of unfulfilled renown
 Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought,
 Far in the Unapparent. Chatterton
 Rose pale, his solemn agony had not
 Yet faded from him; Sidney, as he fought
 And as he fell and as he lived and loved
 Sublimely mild, a Spirit without spot,
 Arose; and Lucan, by his death approved:
 Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing reprov'd.

XLVI.

And many more, whose names on Earth are dark
 But whose transmitted effluence cannot die
 So long as fire outlives the parent spark,
 Rose, robed in dazzling immortality.
 "Thou art become as one of us," they cry,
 "It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long
 "Swung blind in unascended majesty,
 "Silent alone amid an Heaven of Song.
 "Assume thy winged throne, thou Vesper of our throng!"

XLVII.

Who mourns for Adonais? oh come forth
Fond wretch! and know thyself and him aright.
Clasp with thy panting soul the pendulous Earth;
As from a centre, dart thy spirit's light
Beyond all worlds, until its spacious might
Sate the void circumference: then shrink
Even to a point within our day and night;
And keep thy heart light lest it make thee sink
When hope has kindled hope, and lured thee to the brink.

XLVIII.

Or go to Rome, which is the sepulchre
O, not of him, but of our joy: 'tis nought
That ages, empires, and religions there
Lie buried in the ravage they have wrought;
For such as he can lend,—they borrow not
Glory from those who made the world their prey;
And he is gathered to the kings of thought
Who waged contention with their time's decay,
And of the past are all that cannot pass away.

XLIX.

Go thou to Rome,—at once the Paradise,
The grave, the city, and the wilderness;
And where its wrecks like shattered mountains rise,
And flowering weeds, and fragrant copses dress
The bones of Desolation's nakedness
Pass, till the Spirit of the spot shall lead
Thy footsteps to a slope of green access
Where, like an infant's smile, over the dead,
A light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread.

L.

And gray walls moulder round, on which dull Time
Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand;
And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,
Pavilioning the dust of him who planned
This refuge for his memory, doth stand
Like flame transformed to marble; and beneath,
A field is spread, on which a newer band
Have pitched in Heaven's smile their camp of death
Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguished breath.

LL.

Here pause: these graves are all too young as yet
 To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned
 Its charge to each; and if the seal is set,
 Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind,
 Break it not thou! too surely shalt thou find
 Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
 Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind
 Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
 What Adonais is, why fear we to become?

LII.

The One remains, the many change and pass;
 Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
 Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
 Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
 Until Death tramples it to fragments.—Die,
 If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
 Follow where all is fled!—Rome's azure sky,
 Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
 The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

LIII.

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart?
 Thy hopes are gone before: from all things here
 They have departed; thou shouldst now depart!
 A light is past from the revolving year,
 And man, and woman; and what still is dear
 Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.
 The soft sky smiles,—the low wind whispers near;
 'Tis Adonais calls! oh, hasten thither,
 No more let Life divide what Death can join together.

LIV.

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
 That Beauty in which all things work and move,
 That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
 Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
 Which through the web of being blindly wove
 By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
 Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
 The fire for which all thirst; now beams on me,
 Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

LV.

The breath whose might I have invoked in song
Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven,
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given;
The massy earth and spherèd skies are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;
Whilst burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
The soul of Adonaiš, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

CANCELLED PASSAGES OF ADONAIŠ.

PASSAGES OF THE PREFACE.

... The expression of my indignation and sympathy. I will allow myself a first and last word on the subject of calumny as it relates to me. As an author I have dared and invited censure. If I understand myself, I have written neither for profit nor for fame. I have employed my poetical compositions and publications simply as the instruments of that sympathy between myself and others which the ardent and unbounded love I cherished for my kind incited me to acquire. I expected all sorts of stupidity and insolent contempt from those...

... These compositions (excepting the tragedy of the "Cenci," which was written rather to try my powers, than to unburthen my full heart) are insufficiently... commendation than perhaps they deserve, even from their bitterest enemies; but they have not attained any corresponding popularity. As a man, I shrink from notice and regard; the ebb and flow of the world vexes me; I desire to be left in peace. Persecution, contumely, and calumny, have been heaped upon me in profuse measure; and domestic conspiracy and legal oppression have violated in my person the most sacred rights of nature and humanity. The bigot will say it was the recompence of my errors; the man of the world will call it the result of my imprudence; but never upon one head..

... Reviewers, with some rare exceptions, are a most stupid and malignant race. As a bankrupt thief turns thieftaker in despair, so an unsuccessful author turns critic. But a young spirit panting for fame, doubtful of its powers, and certain only of its aspirations, is ill-qualified to assign its true value to the sneer of this world. He knows not that such stuff as this is of the abortive and monstrous births which time consumes as fast as it produces. He sees the truth and falsehood, the merits and demerits, of his case inextricably entangled... No personal offence should have drawn from me this public comment upon such stuff...

... The offence of this poor victim, seems to have consisted solely in his intimacy with Leigh Hunt, Mr. Hazlitt, and some other enemies of despotism and superstition. My friend Hunt has a very hard skull to crack, and will take a deal of killing. I do not know much of Mr. Hazlitt, but...

... I knew personally but little of Keats; but on the news of his situation I wrote to him, suggesting the propriety of trying the Italian climate, and inviting him to join me. Unfortunately he did not allow me...

PASSAGES OF THE POEM.

And ever as he went he swept a lyre
 Of unaccustomed shape, and strings
 Now like the of impetuous fire,
 Which shakes the forest with its murmurings,
 Now like the rush of the ærial wings
 Of the enamoured wind among the treen,
 Whispering unimaginable things,
 And dying on the streams of dew serene,
 Which feed the unmown meads with ever-during green.

* * * * *

And the green Paradise which western waves
 Embosom in their ever-wailing sweep,
 Talking of freedom to their tongueless caves,
 Or to the spirits which within them keep
 A record of the wrongs which, though they sleep,

Die not, but dream of retribution, heard
His hymns, and echoing them from steep to steep,
Kept——

* * * * *

And then came one of sweet and earnest looks,
Whose soft smiles to his dark and night-like eyes
Were as the clear and ever-living brooks
Are to the obscure fountains whence they rise,
Showing how pure they are: a Paradise
Of happy truth upon his forehead low
Lay, making wisdom lovely, in the guise
Of earth-awakening morn upon the brow
Of star-deserted heaven, while ocean gleams below.

His song, though very sweet, was low and faint,
A simple strain——

* * * * *

A mighty Phantasm, half concealed
In darkness of his own exceeding light,
Which clothed his awful presence unrevealed,
Charioted on the night
Of thunder-smoke, whose skirts were chrysolite.

And like a sudden meteor, which outstrips
The splendour-wingèd chariot of the sun,
The armies of the golden stars, each one
Pavilioned in its tent of light—all strewn
Over the chasms of blue night——

HELLAS

A LYRICAL DRAMA

ΜΑΝΤΙΣ ΕΙΜ' ΕΞΘΑΛΩΝ 'ΑΓΩΝΩΝ

ŒDIP. COLON.



TO
HIS EXCELLENCY
PRINCE ALEXANDER MAVROCORDATO
LATE SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
TO THE HOSPODAR OF WALLACHIA
THE DRAMA OF HELLAS
IS INSCRIBED
AS AN IMPERFECT TOKEN
OF THE ADMIRATION, SYMPATHY, AND FRIENDSHIP
OF
THE AUTHOR.

PISA,
November 1st, 1821.



PREFACE.

THE poem of Hellas, written at the suggestion of the events of the moment, is a mere improvise, and derives its interest (should it be found to possess any) solely from the intense sympathy which the Author feels with the cause he would celebrate.

The subject, in its present state, is insusceptible of being treated otherwise than lyrically, and if I have called this poem a drama from the circumstance of its being composed in dialogue, the licence is not greater than that which has

been assumed by other poets who have called their productions epics, only because they have been divided into twelve or twenty-four books.

The Persæ of Æschylus afforded me the first model of my conception, although the decision of the glorious contest now waging in Greece being yet suspended forbids a catastrophe parallel to the return of Xerxes and the desolation of the Persians. I have, therefore, contented myself with exhibiting a series of lyric pictures, and with having wrought upon the curtain of futurity, which falls upon the unfinished scene, such figures of indistinct and visionary delineation as suggest the final triumph of the Greek cause as a portion of the cause of civilization and social improvement.

The drama (if drama it must be called) is, however, so inartificial that I doubt whether, if recited on the Thespian waggon to an Athenian village at the Dionysiaca, it would have obtained the prize of the goat. I shall bear with equanimity any punishment, greater than the loss of such a reward which the Aristarchi of the hour may think fit to inflict.

The only *goat-song* which I have yet attempted has, I confess, in spite of the unfavourable nature of the subject, received a greater and a more valuable portion of applause than I expected or than it deserved.

Common fame is the only authority which I can allege for the details which form the basis of the poem, and I must trespass upon the forgiveness of my readers for the display of newspaper erudition to which I have been reduced. Undoubtedly, until the conclusion of the war, it will be impossible to obtain an account of it sufficiently authentic for historical materials; but poets have their privilege, and it is unquestionable that actions of the most exalted courage have been performed by the Greeks—that they have gained more than one naval victory, and that their defeat in Wallachia was signalized by circumstances of heroism more glorious even than victory.

The apathy of the rulers of the civilized world to the astonishing circumstance of the descendants of that nation to which they owe their civilization—rising as it were from

the ashes of their ruin, is something perfectly inexplicable to a mere spectator of the shews of this mortal scene. We are all Greeks. Our laws, our literature, our religion, our arts, have their root in Greece. But for Greece—Rome, the instructor, the conqueror, or the metropolis of our ancestors, would have spread no illumination with her arms, and we might still have been savages and idolaters; or, what is worse, might have arrived at such a stagnant and miserable state of social institution as China and Japan possess.

The human form and the human mind attained to a perfection in Greece which has impressed its image on those faultless productions, whose very fragments are the despair of modern art, and has propagated impulses which cannot cease, through a thousand channels of manifest or imperceptible operation, to ennoble and delight mankind until the extinction of the race.

The modern Greek is the descendant of those glorious beings whom the imagination almost refuses to figure to itself as belonging to our kind, and he inherits much of their sensibility, their rapidity of conception, their enthusiasm, and their courage. If in many instances he is degraded, by moral and political slavery to the practice of the basest vices it engenders, and that below the level of ordinary degradation; let us reflect that the corruption of the best produces the worst, and that habits which subsist only in relation to a peculiar state of social institution may be expected to cease as soon as that relation is dissolved. In fact, the Greeks, since the admirable novel of "Anastasius" could have been a faithful picture of their manners, have undergone most important changes; the flower of their youth returning to their country from the universities of Italy, Germany, and France, have communicated to their fellow-citizens the latest results of that social perfection of which their ancestors were the original source. The university of Chios contained before the breaking out of the revolution eight hundred students, and among them several Germans and Americans. The munificence and energy of many of the Greek princes and merchants, directed to the renovation of their country with a spirit and a wisdom which has few examples, is above all praise.

The English permit their own oppressors to act according to their natural sympathy with the Turkish tyrant, and to brand upon their name the indelible blot of an alliance with the enemies of domestic happiness, of Christianity and civilization.

Russia desires to possess, not to liberate Greece; and is contented to see the Turks, its natural enemies, and the Greeks, its intended slaves, enfeeble each other until one or both fall into its net. The wise and generous policy of England would have consisted in establishing the independence of Greece, and in maintaining it both against Russia and the Turk;—but when was the oppressor generous or just?

The Spanish Peninsula is already free. France is tranquil in the enjoyment of a partial exemption from the abuses which its unnatural and feeble government are vainly attempting to revive. The seed of blood and misery has been sown in Italy, and a more vigorous race is arising to go forth to the harvest. The world waits only the news of a revolution of Germany to see the tyrants who have pinnacled themselves on its supineness precipitated into the ruin from which they shall never arise. Well do these destroyers of mankind know their enemy, when they impute the insurrection in Greece to the same spirit before which they tremble throughout the rest of Europe, and that enemy well knows the power and the cunning of its opponents, and watches the moment of their approaching weakness and inevitable division to wrest the bloody sceptres from their grasp.

HELLAS

A LYRICAL DRAMA.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MAHMUD.
HASSAN.

DAOOD.
AHASUERUS, *a Jew.*

*Chorus of Greek Captive Women.
Messengers, Slaves, and Attendants.*

SCENE, Constantinople.

TIME, *Sunset.*

Scene, a Terrace on the Seraglio.

MAHMUD (*sleeping*), *an Indian Slave sitting beside his Couch.*

CHORUS OF GREEK CAPTIVE WOMEN.

WE strew these opiate flowers
On thy restless pillow,—
They were stript from Orient bowers,
By the Indian billow.
Be thy sleep
Calm and deep,
Like their's who fell—not our's who weep!

INDIAN.

Away, unlovely dreams!
Away, false shapes of sleep!
Be his, as Heaven seems,
Clear, and bright, and deep!
Soft as love, and calm as death,
Sweet as a summer night without a breath.

CHORUS.

Sleep, sleep! our song is laden
 With the soul of slumber; 15
 It was sung by a Samian maiden,
 Whose lover was of the number
 Who now keep
 That calm sleep
 Whence none may wake, where none shall weep. 20

INDIAN.

I touch thy temples pale!
 I breathe my soul on thee!
 And could my prayers avail,
 All my joy should be
 Dead, and I would live to weep, 25
 So thou might'st win one hour of quiet sleep.

CHORUS.

Breathe low, low
 The spell of the mighty mistress now!
 When Conscience lulls her sated snake,
 And Tyrants sleep, let Freedom wake. 30
 Breathe low—low
 The words which, like secret fire, shall flow
 Through the veins of the frozen earth—low, low!

SEMICHORUS I.

Life may change, but it may fly not;
 Hope may vanish, but can die not; 35
 Truth be veiled, but still it burneth;
 Love repulsed,—but it returneth!

SEMICHORUS II.

Yet were life a charnel where
 Hope lay confined with Despair;
 Yet were truth a sacred lie, 40
 Love were lust—

SEMICHORUS I.

If Liberty
 Lent not life its soul of light,
 Hope its iris of delight,
 Truth its prophet's robe to wear,
 Love its power to give and bear. 45

CHORUS.

In the great morning of the world,
The spirit of God with might unfurled
The flag of Freedom over Chaos,

And all its banded anarchs fled,
Like vultures frightened from Imaus, 50
Before an earthquake's tread.—

So from Time's tempestuous dawn
Freedom's splendour burst and shone:—
Thermopylæ and Marathon

Caught, like mountains beacon-lighted, 55
The springing Fire.—The winged glory
On Philippi half-alighted,

Like an eagle on a promontory.
Its unwearied wings could fan
The quenchless ashes of Milan. 60

From age to age, from man to man,
It lived; and lit from land to land
Florence, Albion, Switzerland.

Then night fell; and, as from night,
Re-assuming fiery flight, 65
From the West swift Freedom came,

Against the course of Heaven and doom,
A second sun arrayed in flame,
To burn, to kindle, to illume.

From far Atlantis its young beams 70
Chased the shadows and the dreams.

France, with all her sanguine steams,
Hid, but quenched it not; again
Through clouds its shafts of glory rain
From utmost Germany to Spain. 75

As an eagle fed with morning
Scorns the embattled tempests' warning,
When she seeks her aërie hanging

In the mountain-cedar's hair,
And her brood expect the clanging 80
Of her wings through the wild air,
Sick with famine:—Freedom, so

To what of Greece remaineth now
Returns; her hoary ruins glow
Like Orient mountains lost in day; 85

Beneath the safety of her wings
Her renovated nurslings prey,
And in the naked lightnings
Of truth they purge their dazzled eyes.
Let Freedom leave—where'er she flies, 90
A Desart, or a Paradise:

Let the beautiful and the brave
Share her glory, or a grave.

SEMICHORUS I.

With the gifts of gladness
Greece did thy cradle strew; 95

SEMICHORUS II.

With the tears of sadness
Greece did thy shroud bedew!

SEMICHORUS I.

With an orphan's affection
She followed thy bier through Time;

SEMICHORUS II.

And at thy resurrection 100
Re-appeareth, like thou, sublime!

SEMICHORUS I.

If Heaven should resume thee,
To Heaven shall her spirit ascend;

SEMICHORUS II.

If Hell should entomb thee,
To Hell shall her high hearts bend. 105

SEMICHORUS I.

If Annihilation——

SEMICHORUS II.

Dust let her glories be!
And a name and a nation
Be forgotten, Freedom, with thee!

INDIAN.

His brow grows darker—breathe not—move not!
He starts—he shudders—ye that love not, 111

With your panting loud and fast,
Have awakened him at last.

MAHMUD (*starting from his sleep*).

Man the Seraglio-guard! make fast the gate.
What! from a cannonade of three short hours? 115
'Tis false! that breach towards the Bosphorus
Cannot be practicable yet—who stirs?
Stand to the match; that when the foe prevails
One spark may mix in reconciling ruin
The conqueror and the conquered! Heave the tower
Into the gap—wrench off the roof.

(*Enter HASSAN.*) Ha! what! 121
The truth of day lightens upon my dream
And I am Mahmud still.

HASSAN.

Your Sublime Highness
Is, strangely moved.

MAHMUD.

The times do cast strange shadows
On those who watch and who must rule their course,
Lest they, being first in peril as in glory, 125
Be whelmed in the fierce ebb:—and these are of them.
Thrice has a gloomy vision hunted me
As thus from sleep into the troubled day;
It shakes me as the tempest shakes the sea, 130
Leaving no figure upon memory's glass.
Would that—no matter. Thou didst say thou knewest
A Jew, whose spirit is a chronicle
Of strange and secret and forgotten things.
I bade thee summon him:—'tis said his tribe 135
Dream, and are wise interpreters of dreams.

HASSAN.

The Jew of whom I spake is old,—so old
He seems to have outlived a world's decay;
The hoary mountains and the wrinkled ocean
Seem younger still than he;—his hair and beard 140
Are whiter than the tempest-sifted snow;
His cold pale limbs and pulseless arteries
Are like the fibres of a cloud instinct
With light, and to the soul that quickens them

Are as the atoms of the mountain-drift 145
 To the winter-wind:—but from his eye looks forth
 A life of unconsumèd thought which pierces
 The present, and the past, and the to-come.
 Some say that this is he whom the great prophet
 Jesus, the son of Joseph, for his mockery 150
 Mocked with the curse of immortality.
 Some feign that he is Enoch: others dream
 He was pre-adamite and has survived
 Cycles of generation and of ruin.
 The sage, in truth, by dreadful abstinence 155
 And conquering penance of the mutinous flesh,
 Deep contemplation, and unwearied study,
 In years outstretched beyond the date of man,
 May have attained to sovereignty and science
 Over those strong and secret things and thoughts 160
 Which others fear and know not.

MAHMUD.

I would talk

With this old Jew.

HASSAN.

Thy will is even now
 Made known to him, where he dwells in a sea-cavern
 'Mid the Demonesi, less accessible
 Than thou or God! He who would question him 165
 Must sail alone at sunset, where the stream
 Of Ocean sleeps around those foamless isles,
 When the young moon is westering as now,
 And evening airs wander upon the wave;
 And when the pines of that bee-pasturing isle, 170
 Green Erebinthus, quench the fiery shadow
 Of his gilt prow within the sapphire water,
 Then must the lonely helmsman cry aloud
 Ahasuerus! and the caverns round
 Will answer Ahasuerus! If his prayer 175
 Be granted, a faint meteor will arise
 Lighting him over Marmora, and a wind
 Will rush out of the sighing pine-forest,
 And with the wind a storm of harmony
 Unutterably sweet, and pilot him 180

Through the soft twilight to the Bosphorus:
 Thence at the hour and place and circumstance
 Fit for the matter of their conference
 The Jew appears. Few dare, and few who dare
 Win the desired communion—but that shout 185
 Bodes—— (a shout within.)

MAHMUD.

Evil, doubtless; like all human sounds.
 Let me converse with spirits.

HASSAN.

That shout again.

MAHMUD.

This Jew whom thou hast summoned—

HASSAN.

Will be here—

MAHMUD.

When the omnipotent hour to which are yoked
 He, I, and all things shall compel—enough. 190
 Silence those mutineers—that drunken crew,
 That crowd about the pilot in the storm.
 Aye! strike the foremost shorter by a head!
 They weary me, and I have need of rest.
 Kings are like stars—they rise and set, they have 195
 The worship of the world, but no repose. (*Exeunt severally.*)

CHORUS.

Worlds on worlds are rolling ever
 From creation to decay,
 Like the bubbles on a river
 Sparkling, bursting, borne away. 200
 But they are still immortal
 Who, through birth's orient portal
 And death's dark chasm hurrying to and fro,
 Clothe their unceasing flight
 In the brief dust and light 205
 Gathered around their chariots as they go;
 New shapes they still may weave,
 New gods, new laws receive,
 Bright or dim are they as the robes they last
 On Death's bare ribs had cast. 210

A power from the unknown God,
 A Promethean conqueror came;
 Like a triumphal path he trod
 The thorns of death and shame.
 A mortal shape to him 215
 Was like the vapour dim
 Which the orient planet animates with light;
 Hell, Sin, and Slavery came,
 Like blood-hounds mild and tame,
 Nor preyed, until their Lord had taken flight; 220
 The moon of Mahomet
 Arose, and it shall set:
 While blazoned as on heaven's immortal noon
 The cross leads generations on.

Swift as the radiant shapes of sleep 225
 From one whose dreams are Paradise
 Fly, when the fond wretch wakes to weep,
 And day peers forth with her blank eyes;
 So fleet, so faint, so fair,
 The Powers of earth and air 230
 Fled from the folding star of Bethlehem:
 Apollo, Pan, and Love,
 And even Olympian Jove
 Grew weak, for killing Truth had glared on them;
 Our hills and seas and streams 235
 Dispeopled of their dreams,
 Their waters turned to blood, their dew to tears,
 Wailed for the golden years.

Enter MAHMUD, HASSAN, DAOOD, and others.

MAHMUD.

More gold? our ancestors bought gold with victory,
 And shall I sell it for defeat?

DAOOD.

The Janizars 240

Clamour for pay.

MAHMUD.

Go! bid them pay themselves
 With Christian blood! Are there no Grecian virgins
 Whose shrieks and spasms and tears they may enjoy?

No infidel children to impale on spears?
 No hoary priests after that Patriarch 245
 Who bent the curse against his country's heart,
 Which clove his own at last? Go! bid them kill,
 Blood is the seed of gold.

DAOOD.

It has been sown,
 And yet the harvest to the sicklemen
 Is as a grain to each.

MAHMUD.

Then, take this signet, 250
 Unlock the seventh chamber in which lie
 The treasures of victorious Solyman.
 An empire's spoil stored for a day of ruin.
 O spirit of my sires! is it not come? 254
 The prey-birds and the wolves are gorged and sleep;
 But these, who spread their feast on the red earth,
 Hunger for gold, which fills not.—See them fed;
 Then, lead them to the rivers of fresh death. (*Exit* DAOOD.
 O! miserable dawn, after a night
 More glorious than the day which it usurped! 260
 O, faith in God! O, power on earth! O, word
 Of the great prophet, whose o'ershadowing wings
 Darkened the thrones and idols of the West,
 Now bright!—For thy sake cursèd be the hour,
 Even as a father by an evil child, 265
 When the Orient moon of Islam rolled in triumph
 From Caucasus to White Ceraunia!
 Ruin above, and anarchy below;
 Terror without, and treachery within;
 The Chalice of destruction full, and all 270
 Thirsting to drink; and who among us dares
 To dash it from his lips? and where is Hope?

HASSAN.

The lamp of our dominion still rides high;
 One God is God—Mahomet is his prophet.
 Four hundred thousand Moslems from the limits 275
 Of utmost Asia, irresistibly
 Throng, like full clouds at the Scirocco's cry;
 But not like them to weep their strength in tears:

They bear destroying lightning, and their step
 Wakes earthquake to consume and overwhelm, 280
 And reign in ruin. Phrygian Olympus,
 Tmolus, and Latmos, and Mycale, roughen
 With horrent arms; and lofty ships even now,
 Like vapours anchored to a mountain's edge,
 Freight with fire and whirlwind, wait at Scala 285
 The convoy of the ever-veering wind.
 Samos is drunk with blood;—the Greek has paid
 Brief victory with swift loss and long despair.
 The false Moldavian serfs fled fast and far,
 When the fierce shout of Allah-illa-Allah! 290
 Rose like the war-cry of the northern wind
 Which kills the sluggish clouds, and leaves a flock
 Of wild swans struggling with the naked storm.
 So were the lost Greeks on the Danube's day!
 If night is mute, yet the returning sun 295
 Kindles the voices of the morning birds;
 Nor at thy bidding less exultingly
 Than birds rejoicing in the golden day,
 The Anarchies of Africa unleash
 Their tempest-winged cities of the sea, 300
 To speak in thunder to the rebel world.
 Like sulphurous clouds, half-shattered by the storm,
 They sweep the pale Ægean, while the Queen
 Of Ocean, bound upon her island-throne,
 Far in the West sits mourning that her sons 305
 Who frown on Freedom spare a smile for thee:
 Russia still hovers, as an eagle might
 Within a cloud, near which a kite and crane
 Hang tangled in inextricable fight,
 To stoop upon the victor;—for she fears 310
 The name of Freedom, even as she hates thine.
 But recreant Austria loves thee as the Grave
 Loves Pestilence, and her slow dogs of war,
 Fleshed with the chase, come up from Italy,
 And howl upon their limits; for they see 315
 The panther, Freedom, fled to her old cover,
 Amid seas and mountains, and a mightier brood
 Crouch round. What Anarch wears a crown or mitre,

Or bears the sword, or grasps the key of gold,
 Whose friends are not thy friends, whose foes thy foes?
 Our arsenals and our armories are full; 821
 Our forts defy assault; ten thousand cannon
 Lie ranged upon the beach, and hour by hour
 Their earth-convulsing wheels affright the city;
 The galloping of fiery steeds makes pale 825
 The Christian merchant; and the yellow Jew
 Hides his hoard deeper in the faithless earth.
 Like clouds, and like the shadows of the clouds,
 Over the hills of Anatolia,
 Swift in wide troops the Tartar chivalry 830
 Sweep;—the far flashing of their starry lances
 Reverberates the dying light of day.
 We have one God, one King, one Hope, one Law;
 But many-headed Insurrection stands
 Divided in itself, and soon must fall. 835

MAHMUD.

Proud words, when deeds come short, are seasonable:
 Look, Hassan, on yon crescent moon, emblazoned
 Upon that shattered flag of fiery cloud
 Which leads the rear of the departing day;
 Wan emblem of an empire fading now! 840
 See how it trembles in the blood-red air,
 And like a mighty lamp whose oil is spent
 Shrinks on the horizon's edge, while, from above,
 One star with insolent and victorious light
 Hovers above its fall, and with keen beams, 845
 Like arrows through a fainting antelope,
 Strikes its weak form to death.

HASSAN.

Even as that moon
 Renews itself——

MAHMUD.

Shall we be not renewed!
 Far other bark than our's were needed now
 To stem the torrent of descending time: 850
 The spirit that lifts the slave before his lord
 Stalks through the capitals of armed kings,
 And spreads his ensign in the wilderness:

Exults in chains; and, when the rebel falls,
 Cries like the blood of Abel from the dust; 355
 And the inheritors of the earth, like beasts
 When earthquake is unleashed, with idiot fear
 Cower in their kingly dens—as I do now.
 What were Defeat when Victory must appal?
 Or Danger, when Security looks pale?— 360
 How said the messenger—who, from the fort
 Islanded in the Danube, saw the battle
 Of Bucharest?—that—

HASSAN.

Ibrahim's scymitar
 Drew with its gleam swift victory from heaven,
 To burn before him in the night of battle— 365
 A light and a destruction.

MAHMUD.

Aye! the day
 Was our's: but how?—

HASSAN.

The light Wallachians,
 The Arnaut, Servian, and Albanian allies
 Fled from the glance of our artillery
 Almost before the thunderstone alit. 370
 One half the Grecian army made a bridge
 Of safe and slow retreat, with Moslem dead;
 The other—

MAHMUD.

Speak—tremble not.—

HASSAN.

Islanded
 By victor myriads, formed in hollow square
 With rough and steadfast front, and thrice flung back
 The deluge of our foaming cavalry; 375
 Thrice their keen wedge of battle pierced our lines.
 Our baffled army trembled like one man
 Before a host, and gave them space; but soon,
 From the surrounding hills, the batteries blazed, 380
 Kneading them down with fire and iron rain:
 Yet none approached; till, like a field of corn

Under the hook of the swart sickleman,
 The band, intrenched in mounds of Turkish dead,
 Grew weak and few.—Then said the Pacha, “Slaves,
 Render yourselves—they have abandoned you— 386
 What hope of refuge, or retreat, or aid?
 We grant your lives.” “Grant that which is thine own!”
 Cried one, and fell upon his sword and died!
 Another—“God, and man, and hope abandon me; 390
 But I to them, and to myself, remain
 Constant:”—he bowed his head, and his heart burst.
 A third exclaimed, “There is a refuge, tyrant,
 Where thou dar’st not pursue, and canst not harm,
 Should’st thou pursue; there we shall meet again.” 395
 Then held his breath, and, after a brief spasm,
 The indignant spirit cast its mortal garment
 Among the slain—dead earth upon the earth!
 So these survivors, each by different ways,
 Some strange, all sudden, none dishonourable, 400
 Met in triumphant death; and when our army
 Closed in, while yet wonder, and awe, and shame,
 Held back the base hyenas of the battle
 That feed upon the dead and fly the living,
 One rose out of the chaos of the slain: 405
 And if it were a corpse which some dread spirit
 Of the old saviours of the land we rule
 Had lifted in its anger wandering by;—
 Or if there burned within the dying man
 Unquenchable disdain of death, and faith 410
 Creating what it feigned;—I cannot tell—
 But he cried, “Phantoms of the free, we come!
 Armies of the Eternal, ye who strike
 To dust the citadels of sanguine kings,
 And shake the souls throned on their stony hearts, 415
 And thaw their frostwork diadems like dew;—
 O ye who float around this clime, and weave
 The garment of the glory which it wears,
 Whose fame, though earth betray the dust it clasped,
 Lies sepulchred in monumental thought;— 420
 Progenitors of all that yet is great,
 Ascribe to your bright senate, O accept

In your high ministrations, us, your sons—
 Us first, and the more glorious yet to come!
 And ye, weak conquerors! giants who look pale 423
 When the crushed worm rebels beneath your tread,
 The vultures and the dogs, your pensioners tame,
 Are overgorged; but, like oppressors, still
 They crave the relic of Destruction's feast.
 The exhalations and the thirsty winds 470
 Are sick with blood; the dew is foul with death;
 Heaven's light is quenched in slaughter: thus, where'er
 Upon your camps, cities, or towers, or fleets,
 The obscene birds the reeking remnants cast 484
 Of these dead limbs,—upon your streams and mountains,
 Upon your fields, your gardens, and your house-tops,
 Where'er the winds shall creep, or the clouds fly,
 Or the dews fall, or the angry sun look down
 With poisoned light—Famine and Pestilence,
 And Panic, shall wage war upon our side! 490
 Nature from all her boundaries is moved
 Against ye: Time has found ye light as foam.
 The Earth rebels; and Good and Evil stake
 Their empire o'er the unborn world of men
 On this one cast;—but ere the die be thrown, 445
 The renovated genius of our race,
 Proud umpire of the impious game, descends
 A seraph-wingèd Victory, bestriding
 The tempest of the Omnipotence of God,
 Which sweeps all things to their appointed doom, 450
 And you to oblivion!"—More he would have said,
 But—

MAHMUD.

Died—as thou shouldst ere thy lips had painted
 Their ruin in the hues of our success.
 A rebel's crime gilt with a rebel's tongue!
 Your heart is Greek, Hassan.

HASSAN.

It may be so: 455
 A spirit not my own wrenched me within,
 And I have spoken words I fear and hate;
 Yet would I die for—

MAHMUD.

Live! O live! outlive
Me and this sinking empire. But the fleet—

HASSAN.

Alas!—

MAHMUD.

The fleet which, like a flock of clouds 460
Chased by the wind, flies the insurgent banner.
Our wingèd-castles from their merchant ships!
Our myriads before their weak pirate bands!
Our arms before their chains! our years of empire
Before their centuries of servile fear! 465
Death is awake! Repulse is on the waters!
They own no more the thunder-bearing banner
Of Mahmud; but, like hounds of a base breed,
Gorge from a stranger's hand, and rend their master.

HASSAN.

Latmos, and Ampelos, and Phanæ, saw 470
The wreck—

MAHMUD.

The caves of the Icarian isles
Told each to the other in loud mockery,
And with the tongue as of a thousand echoes,
First of the sea-convulsing fight—and, then,—
Thou darest to speak—senseless are the mountains: 475
Interpret thou their voice!

HASSAN.

My presence bore
A part in that day's shame. The Grecian fleet
Bore down at day-break from the North, and hung
As multitudinous on the ocean line,
As cranes upon the cloudless Thracian wind. 480
Our squadron, convoying ten thousand men,
Was stretching towards Nauplia when the battle
Was kindled.—
First through the hail of our artillery
The agile Hydriote barks with press of sail 485
Dashed:—ship to ship, cannon to cannon, man
To man were grappled in the embrace of war,

Inextricable but by death or victory.
 The tempest of the raging fight convulsed
 To its crystalline depths that stainless sea, 490
 And shook Heaven's roof of golden morning clouds,
 Poised on an hundred azure mountain-isles.
 In the brief trances of the artillery
 One cry from the destroyed and the destroyer
 Rose, and a cloud of desolation wrapt 495
 The unforeseen event, till the north wind
 Sprung from the sea, lifting the heavy veil
 Of battle-smoke—then victory—victory!
 For, as we thought, three frigates from Algiers
 Bore down from Naxos to our aid, but soon 500
 The abhorred cross glimmered behind, before,
 Among, around us; and that fatal sign
 Dried with its beams the strength in Moslem hearts,
 As the sun drinks the dew.—What more? We fled!—
 Our noonday path over the sanguine foam 505
 Was beacons,—and the glare struck the sun pale,—
 By our consuming transports: the fierce light
 Made all the shadows of our sails blood-red,
 And every countenance blank. Some ships lay feeding
 The ravening fire, even to the water's level; 510
 Some were blown up; some, settling heavily,
 Sunk; and the shrieks of our companions died
 Upon the wind, that bore us fast and far,
 Even after they were dead. Nine thousand perished!
 We met the vultures legioned in the air 515
 Stemming the torrent of the tainted wind;
 They, screaming from their cloudy mountain peaks,
 Stooped through the sulphurous battle-smoke and perched
 Each on the weltering carcass that we loved,
 Like its ill angel or its damnèd soul 520
 Riding upon the bosom of the sea.
 We saw the dog-fish hastening to their feast.
 Joy waked the voiceless people of the sea,
 And ravening Famine left his ocean cave
 To dwell with War, with us, and with Despair. 525
 We met night three hours to the west of P'atmos,
 And with night, tempest—

MAHMUD.

Cease!

(Enter a Messenger.)

MESSENGER.

Your Sublime Highness,
 That Christian hound, the Muscovite Ambassador
 Has left the city.—If the rebel fleet
 Had anchored in the port, had victory 530
 Crowned the Greek legions in the Hippodrome,
 Panic were tamer.—Obedience and Mutiny,
 Like giants in contention planet-struck,
 Stand gazing on each other.—There is peace
 In Stamboul.—

MAHMUD.

Is the grave not calmer still? 535
 Its ruins shall be mine.

HASSAN.

Fear not the Russian:
 The tiger leagues not with the stag at bay
 Against the hunter.—Cunning, base, and cruel,
 He crouches, watching till the spoil be won,
 And must be paid for his reserve in blood. 540
 After the war is fought, yield the sleek Russian
 That which thou canst not keep, his deserved portion
 Of blood, which shall not flow through streets and fields,
 Rivers and seas, like that which we may win,
 But stagnate in the veins of Christian slaves! 545

(Enter second Messenger.)

SECOND MESSENGER.

Nauplia, Tripolizza, Mothon, Athens,
 Navarin, Artas, Monembasia,
 Corinth and Thebes are carried by assault,
 And every Islamite who made his dogs
 Fat with the flesh of Galilean slaves 550
 Passed at the edge of the sword: the lust of blood
 Which made our warriors drunk, is quenched in death;
 But like a fiery plague breaks out anew
 In deeds which make the Christian cause look pale
 In its own light. The garrison of Patras 555

Has store but for ten days, nor is there hope
 But from the Briton: at once slave and tyrant
 His wishes still are weaker than his fears,
 Or he would sell what faith may yet remain
 From the oaths broke in Genoa and in Norway; 560
 And if you buy him not, your treasury
 Is empty even of promises—his own coin.
 The freedman of a western poet chief
 Holds Attica with seven thousand rebels,
 And has beat back the Pacha of Negropont: 565
 The agèd Ali sits in Yanina
 A crownless metaphor of empire:
 His name, that shadow of his withered might,
 Holds our besieging army like a spell
 In prey to famine, pest, and mutiny; 570
 He, bastioned in his citadel, looks forth
 Joyless upon the sapphire lake that mirrors
 The ruins of the city where he reigned
 Childless and sceptreless. The Greek has reaped
 The costly harvest his own blood matured, 575
 Not the sower, Ali—who has bought a truce
 From Ypsilanti with ten camel loads
 Of Indian gold.

(Enter a third Messenger.)

MAHMUD.

What more?

THIRD MESSENGER.

The Christian tribes
 Of Lebanon and the Syrian wilderness
 Are in revolt;—Damascus, Hems, Aleppo 580
 Tremble;—the Arab menaces Medina,
 The Æthiop has intrenched himself in Senaar,
 And keeps the Egyptian rebel well employed,
 Who denies homage, claims investiture
 As price of tardy aid. Persia demands 585
 The cities on the Tigris, and the Georgians
 Refuse their living tribute. Crete and Cyprus,
 Like mountain-twins that from each other's veins
 Catch the volcano-fire and earthquake spasm,
 Shake in the general fever. Through the city, 590

Like birds before a storm, the Santons shriek,
 And prophesyings horrible and new
 Are heard among the crowd: that sea of men
 Sleeps on the wrecks it made, breathless and still.
 A Dervise, learnèd in the Koran, preaches 595
 That it is written how the sins of Islam
 Must raise up a destroyer even now.
 The Greeks expect a Saviour from the west,
 Who shall not come, men say, in clouds and glory,
 But in the omnipresence of that spirit 600
 In which all live and are. Ominous signs
 Are blazoned broadly on the noon-day sky:
 One saw a red cross stamped upon the sun;
 It has rained blood; and monstrous births declare
 The secret wrath of Nature and her Lord. 605
 The army encamped upon the Cydaris,
 Was roused last night by the alarm of battle,
 And saw two hosts conflicting in the air,
 The shadows doubtless of the unborn time
 Cast on the mirror of the night. While yet 610
 The fight hung balanced, there arose a storm
 Which swept the phantoms from among the stars.
 At the third watch the spirit of the plague
 Was heard abroad flapping among the tents;
 Those who relieved watch found the sentinels dead. 615
 The last news from the camp is, that a thousand
 Have sickened, and——

(Enter a fourth Messenger.)

MAHMUD.

And thou, pale ghost, dim shadow
 Of some untimely rumour, speak!

FOURTH MESSENGER.

One comes

Fainting with toil, covered with foam and blood:
 He stood, he says, upon Chelonites' 620
 Promontory, which o'erlooks the isles that groan
 Under the Briton's frown, and all their waters
 Then trembling in the splendour of the moon,
 When as the wandering clouds unveiled or hid
 Her boundless light, he saw two adverse fleets 625

Stalk through the night in the horizon's glimmer,
 Mingling fierce thunders and sulphureous gleams,
 And smoke which strangled every infant wind
 That soothed the silver clouds through the deep air.
 At length the battle slept, but the Scirocco 630
 Awoke, and drove his flock of thunder-clouds
 Over the sea-horizon, blotting out
 All objects—save that in the faint moon-glimpse
 He saw, or dreamed he saw, the Turkish admiral
 And two the loftiest of our ships of war, 635
 With the bright image of that Queen of Heaven
 Who hid, perhaps, her face for grief, reversed ;
 And the abhorred cross—

(*Enter an Attendant.*)

ATTENDANT.

Your Sublime Highness,
 The Jew, who——

MAHMUD.

Could not come more seasonably :
 Bid him attend. I'll hear no more! too long 640
 We gaze on danger through the mist of fear,
 And multiply upon our shattered hopes
 The images of ruin. Come what will!
 To-morrow and to-morrow are as lamps
 Set in our path to light us to the edge 645
 Through rough and smooth, nor can we suffer aught
 Which he inflicts not in whose hand we are. [*Exeunt.*]

SEMICHORUS I.

Would I were the winged cloud
 Of a tempest swift and loud!

I would scorn 650

The smile of morn

And the wave where the moon rise is born!

I would leave

The spirits of eve

A shroud for the corpse of the day to weave 655
 From other threads than mine!

Bask in the deep blue noon divine

Who would, not I.

SEMICHORUS II.

Whither to fly?

SEMICHORUS I.

Where the rocks that gird th' Ægean

660

Echo to the battle pæan

Of the free—

I would flee

A tempestuous herald of victory!

My golden rain

665

For the Grecian slain

Should mingle in tears with the bloody main,

And my solemn thunder knell

Should ring to the world the passing bell

Of tyranny!

670

SEMICHORUS II.

Ah king! wilt thou chain

The rack and the rain?

Wilt thou fetter the lightning and hurricane?

The storms are free,

But we—

675

CHORUS.

O Slavery! thou frost of the world's prime,

Killing its flowers and leaving its thorns bare!

Thy touch has stamped these limbs with crime,

These brows thy branding garland bear,

But the free heart, the impassive soul

680

Scorn thy control!

SEMICHORUS I.

Let there be light! said Liberty,

And like sunrise from the sea,

Athens arose!—Around her born,

Shone like mountains in the morn

685

Glorious states;—and are they now

Ashes, wrecks, oblivion?

SEMICHORUS II.

Go,

Where Thermæ and Asopus swallowed

Persia, as the sand does foam,

Deluge upon deluge followed,

690

Discord, Macedon, and Rome.
And lastly thou!

SEMICHORUS I.

Temples and towers,
Citadels and marts, and they
Who live and die there, have been ours,
And may be thine, and must decay 695
But Greece and her foundations are
Built below the tide of war,
Based on the crystalline sea
Of thought and its eternity;
Her citizens, imperial spirits, 700
Rule the present from the past,
On all this world of men inherits
Their seal is set.

SEMICHORUS II.

Hear ye the blast,
Whose Orphic thunder thrilling calls
From ruin her Titanian walls? 705
Whose spirit shakes the sapless bones
Of Slavery? Argos, Corinth, Crete
Hear, and from their mountain thrones
The dæmons and the nymphs repeat
The harmony.

SEMICHORUS I.

I hear! I hear! 710

SEMICHORUS II.

The world's eyeless charioteer,
Destiny, is hurrying by!
What faith is crushed, what empire bleeds
Beneath her earthquake-footed steeds?
What eagle-wingèd victory sits 715
At her right hand? what shadow flits
Before? what splendour rolls behind?
Ruin and renovation cry
Who but We?

SEMICHORUS I.

I hear! I hear!

The hiss as of a rushing wind, 720
The roar as of an ocean foaming,

The thunder as of earthquake coming.

I hear! I hear!

The crash as of an empire falling,

The shrieks as of a people calling

725

Mercy! mercy!—How they thrill!

Then a shout of "kill! kill! kill!"

And then a small still voice, thus—

SEMICHORUS II.

Fear

Revenge and Wrong bring forth their kind,

The foul cubs like their parents are,

730

Their den is in the guilty mind,

And Conscience feeds them with despair.

SEMICHORUS I.

In sacred Athens, near the fane

Of Wisdom, Pity's altar stood:

Serve not the unknown God in vain,

735

But pay that broken shrine again,

Love for hate and tears for blood.

(*Enter MAHMUD and AHASUERUS.*)

MAHMUD.

Thou art a man thou sayest even as we.

AHASUERUS.

No more!

MAHMUD.

But raised above thy fellow men

By thought, as I by power.

AHASUERUS.

Thou sayest so.

740

MAHMUD.

Thou art an adept in the difficult lore

Of Greek and Frank philosophy; thou numberest

The flowers, and thou measurest the stars;

Thou severest element from element;

Thy spirit is present in the past, and sees

745

The birth of this old world through all its cycles

Of desolation and of loveliness,

And when man was not, and how man became

The monarch and the slave of this low sphere,

And all its narrow circles—it is much— 750
 I honour thee, and would be what thou art
 Were I not what I am; but the unborn hour,
 Cradled in fear and hope, conflicting storms,
 Who shall unveil? Nor thou, nor I, nor any
 Mighty or wise. I apprehended not 755
 What thou hast taught me, but I now perceive
 That thou art no interpreter of dreams;
 Thou dost not own that art, device, or God,
 Can make the future present—let it come!
 Moreover thou disdainest us and ours; 760
 Thou art as God, whom thou contemplatest.

AHASUERUS.

Disdain thee?—not the worm beneath my feet!
 The Fathomless has care for meaner things
 Than thou canst dream, and has made pride for those
 Who would be what they may not, or would seem 765
 That which they are not. Sultan! talk no more
 Of thee and me, the future and the past;
 But look on that which cannot change—the One,
 The unborn and the undying. Earth and ocean,
 Space, and the isles of life or light that gem 770
 The sapphire floods of interstellar air,
 This firmament pavilioned upon chaos,
 With all its cressets of immortal fire,
 Whose outwall, bastioned impregnably
 Against the escape of boldest thoughts, repels them 775
 As Calpe the Atlantic clouds—this Whole
 Of suns, and worlds, and men, and beasts, and flowers,
 With all the silent or tempestuous workings
 By which they have been, are, or cease to be,
 Is but a vision;—all that it inherits 780
 Are motes of a sick eye, bubbles and dreams;
 Thought is its cradle and its grave, nor less
 The future and the past are idle shadows
 Of thought's eternal flight—they have no being:
 Nought is but that which feels itself to be. 785

MAHMUD.

What meanest thou? Thy words stream like a tempest
 Of dazzling mist within my brain—they shake

The earth on which I stand, and hang like night
 On Heaven above me. What can they avail?
 They cast on all things surest, brightest, best, 790
 Doubt, insecurity, astonishment.

AHASUERUS.

Mistake me not! All is contained in each.
 Dodona's forest to an acorn's cup
 Is that which has been, or will be, to that 795
 Which is—the absent to the present. Thought
 Alone, and its quick elements, Will, Passion,
 Reason, Imagination, cannot die;
 They are, what that which they regard appears,
 The stuff whence mutability can weave
 All that it hath dominion o'er, worlds, worms, 800
 Empires, and superstitions. What has thought
 To do with time, or place, or circumstance?
 Wouldst thou behold the future?—ask and have!
 Knock and it shall be opened—look and, lo!
 The coming age is shadowed on the past 805
 As on a glass.

MAHMUD.

Wild, wilder thoughts convulse
 My spirit—Did not Mahomet the Second
 Win Stamboul?

AHASUERUS.

Thou wouldst ask that giant spirit
 The written fortunes of thy house and faith.
 Thou wouldst cite one out of the grave to tell 810
 How what was born in blood must die.

MAHMUD.

Thy words
 Have power on me! I see——

AHASUERUS.

What hearest thou?

MAHMUD.

A far whisper——
 Terrible silence.

AHASUERUS.

What succeeds?

MAHMUD.

The sound

As of the assault of an imperial city, 815
 The hiss of inextinguishable fire,
 The roar of giant cannon; the earthquaking
 Fall of vast bastions and precipitous towers,
 The shock of crags shot from strange enginery,
 The clash of wheels, and clang of armèd hoofs, 820
 And crash of brazen mail as of the wreck
 Of adamantine mountains—the mad blast
 Of trumpets, and the neigh of raging steeds,
 And shrieks of women whose thrill jars the blood,
 And one sweet laugh, most horrible to hear, 825
 As of a joyous infant waked and playing
 With its dead mother's breast, and now more loud
 The mingled battle-cry,—ha! hear I not
Εν τούτῳ νικῇ. Allah, Illah, Allah!

AHASUERUS.

The sulphurous mist is raised—thou seest—

MAHMUD.

A chasm,

As of two mountains in the wall of Stamboul; 830
 And in that ghastly breach the Islamites,
 Like giants on the ruins of a world,
 Stand in the light of sunrise. In the dust
 Glimmers a kingless diadem, and one 835
 Of regal port has cast himself beneath
 The stream of war. Another proudly clad
 In golden arms spurs a Tartarian barb
 Into the gap, and with his iron mace
 Directs the torrent of that tide of men, 840
 And seems—he is—Mahomet!

AHASUERUS.

What thou seest

Is but the ghost of thy forgotten dream.
 A dream itself, yet less, perhaps, than that
 Thou call'st reality. Thou mayst behold
 How cities, on which Empire sleeps enthroned, 845
 Bow their towered crests to mutability.
 Poised by the flood, e'en on the height thou holdest,

Thou mayst now learn how the full tide of power
 Ebbs to its depths.—Inheritor of glory,
 Conceived in darkness, born in blood, and nourished 850
 With tears and toil, thou seest the mortal throes
 Of that whose birth was but the same. The Past
 Now stands before thee like an Incarnation
 Of the To-come; yet wouldst thou commune with
 That portion of thyself which was ere thou 855
 Didst start for this brief race whose crown is death,
 Dissolve with that strong faith and fervent passion
 Which called it from the uncreated deep,
 Yon cloud of war, with its tempestuous phantoms
 Of raging death; and draw with mighty will 860
 The imperial shade hither. (*Exit AHASUERUS.*)

MAHMUD.

Approach!

PHANTOM.

I come

Thence whither thou must go! The grave is fitter
 To take the living than give up the dead;
 Yet has thy faith prevailed, and I am here.
 The heavy fragments of the power which fell 865
 When I arose, like shapeless crags and clouds,
 Hang round my throne on the abyss, and voices
 Of strange lament soothe my supreme repose,
 Wailing for glory never to return.—

A later Empire nods in its decay: 870
 The autumn of a greener faith is come,
 And wolfish change, like winter, howls to strip
 The foliage in which Fame, the eagle, built
 Her aërie, while Dominion whelped below.
 The storm is in its branches, and the frost 875
 Is on its leaves, and the blank deep expects
 Oblivion on oblivion, spoil on spoil,
 Ruin on ruin:—Thou art slow, my son;
 The Anarchs of the world of darkness keep
 A throne for thee, round which thine empire lies 880
 Boundless and mute; and for thy subjects thou,
 Like us, shalt rule the ghosts of murdered life,
 The phantoms of the powers who rule thee now—

Mutinuous passions, and conflicting fears,
 And hopes that sate themselves on dust and die!— 885
 Stript of their mortal strength, as thou of thine.
 Islam must fall, but we will reign together
 Over its ruins in the world of death:—
 And if the trunk be dry, yet shall the seed
 Unfold itself even in the shape of that 890
 Which gathers birth in its decay. Woe! woe!
 To the weak people tangled in the grasp
 Of its last spasms.

MAHMUD.

Spirit, woe to all!
 Woe to the wronged and the avenger! Woe
 To the destroyer, woe to the destroyed! 895
 Woe to the dupe, and woe to the deceiver!
 Woe to the oppressed, and woe to the oppressor!
 Woe both to those that suffer and inflict;
 Those who are born and those who die! but say,
 Imperial shadow of the thing I am, 900
 When, how, by whom, Destruction must accomplish
 Her consummation?

PHANTOM.

Ask the cold pale Hour,
 Rich in reversion of impending death,
 When *he* shall fall upon whose ripe grey hairs
 Sit Care, and Sorrow, and Infirmary— 905
 The weight which Crime, whose wings are plumed with years,
 Leaves in his flight from ravaged heart to heart
 Over the heads of men, under which burthen
 They bow themselves unto the grave: fond wretch!
 He leans upon his crutch, and talks of years 910
 To come, and how in hours of youth renewed
 He will renew lost joys, and——

Voice without.

Victory! Victory!

(The Phantom vanishes.)

MAHMUD.

What sound of the importunate earth has broken
 My mighty trance?

Voice without.

Victory! Victory!

MAHMUD.

Weak lightning before darkness! poor faint smile 915
 Of dying Islam! Voice which art the response
 Of hollow weakness! Do I wake and live?
 Were there such things, or may the unquiet brain,
 Vexed by the wise mad talk of the old Jew,
 Have shaped itself these shadows of its fear? 921
 It matters not!—for nought we see or dream,
 Possess, or lose, or grasp at, can be worth
 More than it gives or teaches. Come what may,
 The future must become the past, and I
 As they were to whom once this present hour, 925
 This gloomy crag of time to which I cling,
 Seemed an Elysian isle of peace and joy
 Never to be attained.—I must rebuke
 This drunkenness of triumph ere it die,
 And dying, bring despair. Victory! poor slaves! 931
(Exit Mahmud.)

Voice without.

Shout in the jubilee of death! The Greeks
 Are as a brood of lions in the den
 Round which the kingly hunters of the earth
 Stand smiling. Anarchs, ye whose daily food
 Are curses, groans, and gold, the fruit of death 935
 From Thule to the girdle of the world,
 Come, feast! the board groans with the flesh of men;
 The cup is foaming with a nation's blood,
 Famine and Thirst await! eat, drink, and die!

SEMICHORUS I.

Victorious Wrong, with vulture scream, 940
 Salutes the risen sun, pursues the flying day!
 I saw her, ghastly as a tyrant's dream,
 Perch on the trembling pyramid of night,
 Beneath which earth and all her realms pavilioned lay
 In visions of the dawning undelight. 945
 Who shall impede her flight?
 Who rob her of her prey?

Voice without.

Victory! Victory! Russia's famished eagles
 Dare not to prey beneath the crescent's light.
 Impale the remnant of the Greeks! despoil! 950
 Violate! make their flesh cheaper than dust!

SEMICHORUS II.

Thou voice which art
 The herald of the ill in splendour hid!
 Thou echo of the hollow heart
 Of monarchy, bear me to thine abode 955
 When desolation flashes o'er a world destroyed:
 Oh, bear me to those isles of jagged cloud
 Which float like mountains on the earthquake, mid
 The momentary oceans of the lightning,
 Or to some toppling promontory proud 960
 Of solid tempest whose black pyramid,
 Riven, overhangs the founts intensely brightning
 Of those dawn-tinted deluges of fire
 Before their waves expire,
 When heaven and earth are light, and only light 965
 In the thunder night!

Voice without.

Victory! Victory! Austria, Russia, England,
 And that tame serpent, that poor shadow, France,
 Cry peace, and that means death when monarchs speak.
 Ho, there! bring torches, sharpen those red stakes, 970
 These chains are light, fitter for slaves and poisoners
 Than Greeks. Kill! plunder! burn! let none remain.

SEMICHORUS I.

Alas! for Liberty!
 If numbers, wealth, or unfulfilling years,
 Or fate, can quell the free! 975
 Alas! for Virtue, when
 Torments, or contumely, or the sneers
 Of erring judging men
 Can break the heart where it abides.
 Alas! if Love, whose smile makes this obscure world splendid,
 Can change with its false times and tides, 981
 Like hope and terror,—
 Alas for Love!

And Truth, who wanderest lone and unbefriended,
 If thou canst veil thy lie-consuming mirror 985
 Before the dazzled eyes of Error,
 Alas for thee! Image of the Above.

SEMICHORUS II.

Repulse, with plumes from conquest torn,
 Led the ten thousand from the limits of the morn
 Through many an hostile Anarchy! 990
 At length they wept aloud, and cried, "the Sea! the Sea!"
 Through exile, persecution, and despair,
 Rome was, and young Atlantis shall become
 The wonder, or the terror, or the tomb

Of all whose step wakes Power lulled in her savage lair:
 But Greece was as a hermit child, 995

Whose fairest thoughts and limbs were built
 To woman's growth, by dreams so mild,
 She knew not pain or guilt;
 And now, O Victory, blush! and Empire tremble 1000
 When ye desert the free—

If Greece must be
 A wreck, yet shall its fragments re-assemble,
 And build themselves again impregnably

In a diviner clime, 1005
 To Amphionic music on some Cape sublime,
 Which frowns above the idle foam of Time.

SEMICHORUS I.

Let the tyrants rule the desert they have made;
 Let the free possess the paradise they claim;
 Be the fortune of our fierce oppressors weighed 1010
 With our ruin, our resistance, and our name!

SEMICHORUS II.

Our dead shall be the seed of their decay,
 Our survivors be the shadow of their pride,
 Our adversity a dream to pass away—
 Their dishonour a remembrance to abide! 1015

Voice without.

Victory! Victory! The bought Briton sends
 The keys of ocean to the Islamite.—
 Now shall the blazon of the cross be veiled,
 And British skill directing Othman might,

Thunder-strike rebel victory. O keep holy 1020
 This jubilee of unrevengèd blood—
 Kill! crush! despoil! Let not a Greek escape!

SEMICHORUS I.

Darkness has dawned in the East
 On the noon of time:
 The death-birds descend to their feast, 1025
 From the hungry clime.
 Let Freedom and Peace flee far
 To a sunnier strand,
 And follow Love's folding star
 To the Evening land! 1030

SEMICHORUS II.

The young moon has fed
 Her exhausted horn,
 With the sunset's fire:
 The weak day is dead,
 But the night is not born; 1035
 And, like loveliness panting with wild desire
 While it trembles with fear and delight,
 Hesperus flies from awakening night,
 And pants in its beauty and speed with light
 Fast flashing, soft, and bright. 1040
 Thou beacon of love! thou lamp of the free!
 Guide us far, far away,
 To climes where now veiled by the ardour of day
 Thou art hidden
 From waves on which weary noon, 1045
 Faints in her summer swoon,
 Between Kingless continents sinless as Eden,
 Around mountains and islands inviolably
 Prankt on the sapphire sea.

SEMICHORUS I.

Through the sunset of hope, 1050
 Like the shapes of a dream,
 What Paradise islands of glory glean!
 Beneath Heaven's cope,
 Their shadows more clear float by—
 The sound of their oceans, the light of their sky, 1055
 The music and fragrance their solitudes breathe

Burst, like morning on dream, or like Heaven on death
 Through the walls of our prison ;
 And Greece, which was dead, is arisen !

CHORUS.

The world's great age begins anew, 1060

The golden years return,
 The earth doth like a snake renew
 Her winter weeds outworn :
 Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam,
 Like wrecks of a dissolving dream. 1065

A brighter Hellas rears its mountains
 From waves serener far ;
 A new Peneus rolls his fountains
 Against the morning-star.
 Where fairer Tempes bloom, there sleep 1070
 Young Cyclads on a sunnier deep.

A loftier Argo cleaves the main,
 Fraught with a later prize ;
 Another Orpheus sings again,
 And loves, and weeps, and dies. 1075
 A new Ulysses leaves once more
 Calypso for his native shore.

O, write no more the tale of Troy,
 If earth Death's scroll must be !
 Nor mix with Laian rage the joy 1080
 Which dawns upon the free :
 Although a subtler Sphinx renew
 Riddles of death Thebes never knew.

Another Athens shall arise,
 And to remoter time 1085
 Bequeath, like sunset to the skies,
 The splendour of its prime ;
 And leave, if nought so bright may live,
 All earth can take or Heaven can give.

Saturn and Love their long repose 1090
 Shall burst, more bright and good

Than all who fell, than One who rose,
 Than many unsubdued:
 Not gold, not blood, their altar dowers,
 But votive tears and symbol flowers.

1095

O cease! must hate and death return?
 Cease! must men kill and die?
 Cease! drain not to its dregs the urn
 Of bitter prophecy.
 The world is weary of the past,
 O might it die or rest at last!

1100

NOTES.

(1) *The quenchless ashes of Milan* [line 60].

MILAN was the centre of the resistance of the Lombard league against the Austrian tyrant. Frederic Barbarossa burnt the city to the ground, but liberty lived in its ashes, and it rose like an exhalation from its ruin. See Sismondi's "*Histoire des Républiques Italiennes*," a book which has done much towards awakening the Italians to an imitation of their great ancestors.

(2) *The Chorus* [line 197 *et seq.*].

The popular notions of Christianity are represented in this chorus as true in their relation to the worship they superseded, and that which in all probability they will supersede, without considering their merits in a relation more universal. The first stanza contrasts the immortality of the living and thinking beings which inhabit the planets, and to use a common and inadequate phrase, *clothe themselves in matter*, with the transience of the noblest manifestations of the external world.

The concluding verses indicate a progressive state of more or less exalted existence, according to the degree of perfection which every distinct intelligence may have attained. Let it not be supposed that I mean to dogmatize upon a subject, concerning which all men are equally

ignorant, or that I think the Gordian knot of the origin of evil can be disentangled by that or any similar assertions. The received hypothesis of a Being resembling men in the moral attributes of his nature, having called us out of non-existence, and after inflicting on us the misery of the commission of error, should superadd that of the punishment and the privations consequent upon it, still would remain inexplicable and incredible. That there is a true solution of the riddle, and that in our present state that solution is unattainable by us, are propositions which may be regarded as equally certain: meanwhile, as it is the province of the poet to attach himself to those ideas which exalt and ennoble humanity, let him be permitted to have conjectured the condition of that futurity towards which we are all impelled by an inextinguishable thirst for immortality. Until better arguments can be produced than sophisms which disgrace the cause, this desire itself must remain the strongest and the only presumption that eternity is the inheritance of every thinking being.

(3) *No hoary priests after that Patriarch* [line 245].

The Greek Patriarch after having been compelled to fulminate an anathema against the insurgents was put to death by the Turks.

Fortunately the Greeks have been taught that they cannot buy security by degradation, and the Turks, though equally cruel, are less cunning than the smooth-faced tyrants of Europe. As to the anathema, his Holiness might as well have thrown his mitre at Mount Athos for any effect that it produced. The chiefs of the Greeks are almost all men of comprehension and enlightened views on religion and politics.

(4) *The freedman of a western poet chief* [line 563].

A Greek who had been Lord Byron's servant commands the insurgents in Attica. This Greek, Lord Byron informs me, though a poet and an enthusiastic patriot, gave him rather the idea of a timid and unenterprising person. It appears that circumstances make men what they are, and that we all contain the germ of a degree of degrada-

tion or of greatness whose connexion with our character is determined by events.

(5) *The Greeks expect a Saviour from the West* [line 598].

It is reported that this Messiah had arrived at a seaport near Lacedæmon in an American brig. The association of names and ideas is irresistibly ludicrous, but the prevalence of such a rumour strongly marks the state of popular enthusiasm in Greece.

(6) *The sound as of the assault of an Imperial City* [line 815].

For the vision of Mahmud of the taking of Constantinople in 1453, See Gibbon's "*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*," vol. xii. p. 223.

The manner of the invocation of the spirit of Mahomet the Second will be censured as over subtle. I could easily have made the Jew a regular conjuror, and the Phantom an ordinary ghost. I have preferred to represent the Jew as disclaiming all pretension, or even belief, in supernatural agency, and as tempting Mahmud to that state of mind in which ideas may be supposed to assume the force of sensations through the confusion of thought with the objects of thought, and the excess of passion animating the creations of imagination.

It is a sort of natural magic, susceptible of being exercised in a degree by any one who should have made himself master of the secret associations of another's thoughts.

(7) *The Chorus* [line 1060 *et seq.*].

The final chorus is indistinct and obscure, as the event of the living drama whose arrival it foretells. Prophecies of wars, and rumours of wars, &c. may safely be made by poet or prophet in any age, but to anticipate however darkly a period of regeneration and happiness is a more hazardous exercise of the faculty which bards possess or feign. It will remind the reader "*magno nec proximus intervallo*" of Isaiah and Virgil, whose ardent spirits overleaping the actual reign of evil which we endure and bewail, already saw the possible and perhaps approaching state of society in which the "*lion shall lie down with the*

lamb," and "omnis feret omnia tellus." Let these great names be my authority and my excuse.

(8) *Saturn and Love their long repose shall burst* [line 1090].

Saturn and Love were among the deities of a real or imaginary state of innocence and happiness. *All* those *who fell*, or the Gods of Greece, Asia, and Egypt; the *One who rose*, or Jesus Christ, at whose appearance the idols of the Pagan World were amerced of their worship; and *the many unsubdued*, or the monstrous objects of the idolatry of China, India, the Antarctic islands, and the native tribes of America, certainly have reigned over the understandings of men in conjunction or in succession, during periods in which all we know of evil has been in a state of portentous, and, until the revival of learning and the arts, perpetually increasing activity. The Grecian gods seem indeed to have been personally more innocent, although it cannot be said, that as far as temperance and chastity are concerned, they gave so edifying an example as their successor. The sublime human character of Jesus Christ was deformed by an imputed identification with a power, who tempted, betrayed, and punished the innocent beings who were called into existence by his sole will; and for the period of a thousand years, the spirit of this most just, wise, and benevolent of men, has been propitiated with myriads of hecatombs of those who approached the nearest to his innocence and wisdom, sacrificed under every aggravation of atrocity and variety of torture. The horrors of the Mexican, the Peruvian, and the Indian superstitions are well known.

WRITTEN ON HEARING THE NEWS OF THE DEATH OF NAPOLEON.

WHAT! alive and so bold, oh earth?

Art thou not overbold?

What! leapest thou forth as of old
In the light of thy morning mirth,

The last of the flock of the starry fold? 5

Ha! leapest thou forth as of old?

Are not the limbs still when the ghost is fled,

And canst thou move, Napoleon being dead?

How! is not thy quick heart cold?

What spark is alive on thy hearth? 10

How! is not *his* death-knell knolled?

And livest *thou* still, Mother Earth?

Thou wert warming thy fingers old

O'er the embers covered and cold

Of that most fiery spirit, when it fled— 15

What, Mother, do you laugh now he is dead?

"Who has known me of old," replied Earth,

"Or who has my story told?

It is thou who art overbold."

And the lightning of scorn laughed forth 20

As she sung, "to my bosom I fold

All my sons when their knell is knolled,

And so with living motion all are fed,

And the quick spring like weeds out of the dead.

"Still alive and still bold," shouted Earth, 25

"I grow bolder and still more bold.

The dead fill me ten thousand fold

Fuller of speed, and splendour, and mirth,

I was cloudy, and sullen, and cold,

Like a frozen chaos uprolled, 30

Till by the spirit of the mighty dead

My heart grew warm. I feed on whom I fed.

"Aye, alive and still bold," muttered Earth,

"Napoleon's fierce spirit rolled,

In terror and blood and gold,

A torrent of ruin to death from his birth.

Leave the millions who follow to mould

The metal before it be cold;

And weave into his shame, which like the dead

Shrouds me, the hopes that from his glory fled."

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